

AURELIUS "AURY" FERNANDEZ

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

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[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Fernandez]

Q: Today is the 26th of August 1997. This is an interview with Aurelius Fernandez, and known as "Aury." I'll spell the first name "A-U-R-E-L-I-U-S," and Fernandez is "F-E-R-N-A-N-D-E-Z."

FERNANDEZ: Aury is spelled "A-U-R-Y."

Q: "A-U-R-Y," okay. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Let's start at sort of the beginning. Aury, could you tell me where you were born and something about your parents?

FERNANDEZ: I was born in 1931 June 13 in Niagara Falls, New York. I was the ninth of twelve children.

Q: Good Heavens!

FERNANDEZ: Still am. All but one of our twelve children is still living. We maintain a great kinship of interest with things dealing with Spain. Most of my brothers and sisters have gone back to Spain over time. I went there two years ago to continue some research on my family tree. I traced my mother's family back to 1731 in a little church in northern Spain, and my father's family to the early part of the 19th century. My grammar school and high school were in Niagara Falls, New York.

Q: First of all, a little more about the parents. Were they born here in the United States and what sort of jobs?

FERNANDEZ: Both of them were born in 1896. Last year was the 100th anniversary of their birth. So just a little sideline about all this is, we have our semiannual family reunions, we always make a T-shirt and everything. We get 50 to 70 people who are from the extended family together. My father came over in 1912 from the province of Asturias in northern Spain. He went to Cuba. He was there alone till 1916. In 1916 he came to the United States via Tampa, Florida. I know this from records that I researched at the National Archives. My mother came over in April of 1917. She always told me when I was a little boy that she arrived here the day before unrestricted submarine warfare began in World War I. That's reasonably accurate, because I looked up the date. At any rate, I have the passenger list of the ship on which she arrived.

Q: Where was she coming from?

FERNANDEZ: She came from northern Spain also, from a little city called Miranda near a town called Aviles. All of these [towns] are now [a] contiguous metropolitan area. She was the second youngest of her family, and the youngest was kept back in Spain by her mother. My mother was escorting a woman who was coming to the United States to marry my mother's brother, who was already here. She [told me that she] traveled in steerage, [and I verified this from the passenger list]. My aunt was coming over to marry [a man] who became my uncle Hevia.

My uncle Hevia was in West Virginia awaiting his bride to come with my mother and they married there. They were in the area of Clarksburg, West Virginia where my father had ended up, too, around 1917-1918. My dad went there to work in the coal mines. My mother went there accompanying her future sister-in-law, and the war broke out and she stayed. My mother and father met and they married in 1921. They went shortly thereafter, 1922 or so, up to Niagara Falls, New York, and stayed there for awhile. My father was working in the electrochemical industry which was developing at the time. They had one child in 1921.

They then went back to West Virginia because they were sort of homesick. They stayed [about] a year and a half or so. Another child was born there, my second sister Louise, who died in 1958. [She is the] only one of the 12 children who is not living. At any rate, they went back to Niagara Falls around 1923, '24 and they settled there and continued their good Catholic [practice]. They had 12 children. Seven sisters, still living, and four brothers. We are all still in touch with one another. I was just 42 in New Hampshire visiting with my sister who is going to be 71 this year. Our tradition over the years involves [having] these bi-annual family reunions. I mentioned earlier, the nice T-shirt we made the last time. We had the wedding picture of my mother and father. I have all of the documents for that. I'm sort of the family historian. I've got all of the marriage certificates, their papers when they left Spain and everything. I had a marvelous time doing a lot of the genealogical research.

Q: You grew up basically in Niagara Falls?

FERNANDEZ: I grew up there. I left for college in 1949. I went to a small teacher's college for two years in Fredonia, New York, now part of the State University of New York system.

Q: College, you went to what, you graduated high school?

FERNANDEZ: I graduated from high school in 1949 in Niagara Falls. I went out to Fredonia for two years then I went on to Bowling Green State University where I finished my BA.

Q: That's in Kentucky?

FERNANDEZ: Bowling Green, Ohio. I finished my degree there on June 15 of 1953. I remember the graduation date because it's my brother's birthday. I then started in on a master's degree.

Q: In what?

FERNANDEZ: In English literature. I was drafted the following November. I went off to military service for three very, really exciting years.

Q: What attracted you towards English literature?

FERNANDEZ: I don't know. I've been a Britainophile all my life. I recall that World War II is really, sort of where my mindset begins. I don't really remember much before World War II. I remember all of this business of the Brits and everything and the stiff upper lip and you know how the Brits have always been romanticized in their movies and everything. So I became greatly interested in that and just began to do more work in English literature, and thought maybe it would be nice to be an English literature professor. I'd only known school, I hadn't really worked.

Q: You were in the military from when to when?

FERNANDEZ: I was in the military from November of 1953 to November of 1956. It was really a great period for me. I was in the counterintelligence corps. I was an enlisted man. I had a marvelous time and I'm still in touch with some people from those times. I learned German, which was the first foreign language I learned to really speak. I traveled around Europe and in that time went twice to Spain to see my mother's youngest sister. My father still had a sister and brother living in those years. I traveled throughout Europe. I learned German, and learned a great deal about Germany. I extended for an extra year because I was having such a great time.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

FERNANDEZ: We were working with refugees out of Eastern Europe, out of eastern Germany, the section I worked in. The objective was to recruit people who could serve as agents for you in Eastern Europe. I can't claim that I ever recruited one. As part of my work, I used to meet with some refugees who had come over illegally. We used to interview them on certain subjects. I think the information we collected was just infinitely irrelevant and marginal to the whole effort because it was so low level. But there were two or three, in that period, events that rather stick out. For instance, when the tunnel was built between West and East Berlin.

Q: This was a CIA operation?

FERNANDEZ: That was a CIA operation. I had absolutely nothing to do with it. I didn't even know about it until I read about it in the newspapers. At any rate, that was one event that occurred during that period which was rather interesting. Another one was the threats that were made against Berlin in that time by Khrushchev, making it a very sensitive thing. We were really just restricted to West Berlin.

Q: Where were you operating?

FERNANDEZ: We were operating out of Berlin, in the... I think it was a former Luftwaffe office. It was well known. I have friends in the Foreign Service from those years, all retired, of course. But it was there that I had this exposure, another impetus, to develop working in the Foreign Service.

Q: You were in the military from when?

FERNANDEZ: 1953 to 1956.

Q: Were you there during the Hungarian crisis?

FERNANDEZ: I was on the high seas when that crisis and the Suez occurred.

Q: That was around October of '56.

FERNANDEZ: It was October of 1956. We were on the high seas. I had asked to come back by ship. I had never really been on a ship across the ocean. That's the only time I ever did it and I'd never do it again. I remember being so seasick. I could remember the fears we had. Here I was, a little army sergeant, and having been one who was a deployed civilian and everything. I had a little group of people I had to look after on the ship. The great fear was that they would turn the ship around and take us to Suez. How brilliant we were. The other thing was the Hungarian uprising. When that occurred I got to New York and I think it was Fort Dix where I was discharged. I remember going up to New York and Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge at the United Nations holding forth about Hungarian events and the Suez events, in the few days that I stayed up at the UN before going back to Niagara Falls. All of this was just giving me more and more impetus to get involved in foreign affairs.

Q: While you were in Berlin did you have any contact with the State Department, USIA, Foreign Service?

FERNANDEZ: I did indeed in that period but it was rather marginal. One of the assignments I had at one point was to track the work of the military missions. This was for the Army. One of the things we were doing was trying to track the activities of the military missions in West Berlin. We had telephone taps and we knew where parties would be so you would go and look and see if you could see the driver and one thing or another. Nothing ever came of any of that.

At any rate, at that time I remember one of the persons that we dealt with was a protocol officer whose name I believe was Jules Bernard. A very elegant man who greatly impressed me. I used to visit with him about once a month in the office and we would talk about the work of the military missions. I can remember him saying, "You know, you fellows come over here and you really never give me anything." I was beginning to understand how the system works, and he was dead right. We would just go there and try to get some leads, something to follow up on.

But to concentrate on that military period, I'm still in touch with two people who served with me. One of whom was a Foreign Service officer, and one was a university professor. One of them was Fred Spatz, who must appear in one of your records here. Fred and I were enlisted men and when we first arrived we worked in this registry with all these little five by seven cards on which they recorded all information. At any rate, Fred went on to become one of the great experts on Richard Wagner, which is a great interest of mine. My wife and I were in California last year, and we met with Fred. I had written a poem, and I reviewed his book for the Foreign Service Journal, although it was never published. I might mention that George Mitchell was in our unit, too. He later become the Senate majority leader.

Q: You came back in '56, were discharged, and then what, you went to Columbia?

FERNANDEZ: I went to Columbia, to the school of international affairs in the two-year program.

Q: Does this reflect international rather than English literature change of...?

FERNANDEZ: While I was in the Army that I realized how much interest I had in foreign affairs. Even back in my Fredonia days the international relations club and things like this were always sort of a sideline of mine. I always thought it was rather interesting. While I was in the Army, I said, "Why in the hell don't I make a career out of that instead of English literature?" That's how it all began. I went to Columbia for this two-year program and studied under some marvelous people like William T.R. Fox. I drop the name because he was way beyond me. It was quite a challenge for me. I got through the school all right. As a matter of fact, I was given a grant after the first semester for my tuition. But I was really not terribly well prepared to go on to any kind of work in foreign affairs in any serious way and this gave me a real leg up. I always felt that was the foundation on which I built.

Q: Was there any concentration on your part as far as foreign affairs goes?

FERNANDEZ: Yes, there was. I concentrated on German affairs because that was the one language I knew. Fritz Stern was there at the time, an historian, who is still living. I studied under him. But I was really focused on European affairs during that period. I made the decision, when I looked at what the world looked like at the time, the Cold War and Sputnik and everything else coming up, whether I would do Russian or German. I took the German because I had a leg up on it, and I stayed with it, pretty much. I toyed at one point at maybe looking at Turkish, to do something in the Middle East, or maybe Arabic, but I settled on the German area because I was really better prepared for that.

Q: When you got out in '58, whither?

FERNANDEZ: From there I went to the Department of the Army, as a matter of fact, they came to me. Somebody from my Army Intelligence days recruited at Columbia. My name was on the list, they said "Aury, we'd like to offer you a job." They did, and I took it. It didn't turn out to be too satisfactory in many respects, but I went back to Berlin. By that time I had gotten married to my wife, Janet, from Hutchinson, Kansas. At the time I was going to start working on a Ph.D. in international relations, having finished a two-year degree at Columbia feeling that maybe if I keep after this, I could really do this work. So I went to the Department of the Army, then, as a civilian, and went back to Berlin.

Q: What were you doing? In the first place, you were in Berlin from when to when?

FERNANDEZ: I was in Berlin, then, the second time from 1960 to '62.

Q: There's a gap of about two years.

FERNANDEZ: In 1956 I got out of the Army. So 1957 to 1959 were my Columbia years, where I got my MIA, the Master's of International Affairs. Then I went in the early 1960s to the Department of the Army as a civilian. I was in Berlin from 1960 to 1962, again as a civilian back in these same offices. They were still working, basically, on Eastern Germany but a little more focus on Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary, which helped expand my experience. But I wasn't too pleased with that. It was from there that I left to join USIA.

Q: I would think it's a little hard to go back to a place after you've been away for some time, and to find you're almost in the same quarters. Maybe the job has changed a little.

FERNANDEZ: Well, it was not so much that as it was the job itself. I didn't feel it had much promise, certainly not as much, as it seemed to me, that the Foreign Service would have. It was during that period that I was very much involved with USIA. I had many friends in there, Bob Voth and Frederick Irwin. I can remember a great number of other names there. At any rate it was in that period that I realized that this job with the Department of the Army wouldn't have the opportunity that USIA would have. So I left that and then my next step was into USIA.

Q: During this '60-'62 period it was an interesting time. Kennedy was elected, you had the Berlin Wall, but when you're talking about that time, can you give me a feeling of what you were hearing from your working colleagues and others both in the Army and out as this crisis developed?

FERNANDEZ: Well, I was hearing a great deal, but I, of course, was at a very low level. One of the things that I did there was summarizing [events that were described in] the press. I was doing that on an almost daily basis back then. I felt we were really quite removed from everything that was going on. Now just to give you an example of an event during that period that was sort of a worm's eye view of what was going on is the Berlin Wall went up on August 13, 1961. I remember that. I was a GS-9, something like that, and was following all this.

The section in which I was working was really working with political affairs, and that was the attraction for me to go there in the first place. In the run up to the closing down of the border on Sunday August the 13, I can recall that Friday in our office, which was headed by an Army lieutenant colonel, a sort of GS-11 civilian, myself and a few others. We had information on that date. Though I didn't have personally have this information, one of the sources, as they're called, came in with the information that there was a tremendous amount of activity going on around the Berlin area. There was a lot of construction material being set up around and who knows what's happening. This is a worm's eye view from somebody who was working for the Department of the Army in Berlin at the time.

That Friday I can recall working late into the night putting reports together trying to interpret it. It seemed to me that it was a medical doctor who had provided the lead. He was the source who brought in this report. There was all the running around with Colonel Livingston going on over to CIA and to the Berlin mission offices and sharing all this information. As it turned out that Saturday night, they closed down the border, but the wall didn't go up instantly. The crisis [developed] and the killings on the border of people trying to escape and so forth, and then the border being closed and the walls, the buildings being bricked up that faced into West Berlin, and going up into the French sector. We were watching all this as part of our observations in the political section of the Army there to track what was going on.

It was a rather harrowing period and kind of scary. This was in August. I guess it was October when General Clay, who had already been brought over to bolster Berlin morale and such, directed armed military jeeps, armed soldiers, to enforce to drive through the border. That was a rather harrowing thing.

Q: What was the feeling that you were getting from your colleagues about the viability of West Berlin as this went on?

FERNANDEZ: At my level there was uncertainty. You couldn't really say. You'd hope against hope that it wouldn't happen. For example, when the Missile Crisis occurred. October 1962, when that occurred, of course, there was the incident, and I'll never forget the name of the ship, the Russian ship that was carrying what the U.S. said were missiles to Cuba going down in the North Atlantic. In addition to the quarantine, President John Kennedy announced that this ship better not go in there. This ship was sailing down the North Atlantic and I remember the little group we had put together, curiously, by USIA people, were young Germans and young Americans who'd get together and talk and we'd practice our German and they'd practice their English. We'd talk about political events.

We had a very, very political little group that got together once a month and have our stamkisch and talk about events. I remember wondering whether the [ship] was going to be stopped and let off or start World War III or whatever. There was considerable concern among the Germans I knew and among the Americans at my level who were looking at this, concern and uncertainty as to whether or not the Russians would turn around. Of course, they did, after all.

Q: I remember talking to somebody who was in our mission in Berlin at the time and there was a great deal, at least according to him, there was a great deal of unease about Kennedy. They felt that Kennedy...I mean we're talking about the Berlin Wall time and all this, that Kennedy wasn't going to be tough enough and stand up.

FERNANDEZ: It seems to me it's a little bit like conventional wisdom the feeling that [Chancellor] Adenauer had great mistrust of Kennedy. Here is this young man born in this century now leading the United States and all the old timers that were [former leaders] and so forth who had been so influential in getting Berlin on its feet, getting West Germany on its feet. These people were no longer involved there. There was a whole new team coming up. So the conventional wisdom was that Adenauer had great doubts about whether or not Kennedy would face up to this.

The fact that Kennedy did two things, I would say, which sort of illustrate his perception of the situation, that he needed to bolster things. The first thing he did is he sent [Vice President] Lyndon Johnson to Berlin. Johnson went there about a week or two weeks after the Wall went up. Then he sent General Clay there to be resident and to keep up this dialogue with Willy Brandt who was the mayor [of Berlin] at the time. It was all a rather uncertain period. Looking back I would say well, that just really sort of codifies the situation that existed between East and West. But it did, at any rate, close down the border.

Q: Were you all thinking about how the hell you were going to get out of there?

FERNANDEZ: They were worried, yes. But how seriously...I guess semi-seriously, because I can recall that there were all these plans of how to get out. There was always a roster for pulling you out in any event. We never had any practice drills or anything like that. Now that you mention it, I hadn't really even thought of that experience, explicitly. There wasn't any plan to get us out. I didn't have a train or plane assigned to me to get out of town.

Q: You mentioned this getting together with your people in the stamkisch, which was sort of the table that was reserved in a beer place where the same people always got together.

FERNANDEZ: Right, and they're usually men, well, they're always men.

Q: Maybe they've got women stamkisher. You mentioned this group you'd get together with of Germans. What was sort of the mood of the Berliners that you were seeing? You had two very difficult crises while you were there. One, the Wall, and two, was the Cuban Missile Crisis. Both were probably the closest we'd come in the entire Cold War, to war.

FERNANDEZ: I remember two people out of this group, [a man named] Dagobert, who was a young lawyer. You know, we were all men in our late twenties. Another guy named Manfred, I can't recall his last name. Dagobert was a bit of an elitist and he was always holding back. He had studied in the United States, and he would not criticize the U.S. very directly. There were two other chaps both of whom were in the military at the time. We felt that Dagobert would never really explain, but Manfred never hesitated. He was a very, very emphatic and outspoken man. He constantly expressed great concerns that the United States would not go to the well with the Germans over Berlin. You know, "Well, then what would happen?" "Well, it would go off." "Well, well, then it's finished. Berlin blows away and the new world begins," and that's just one example I could give.

One finds in this sort of thing in that period, it seems to me, a considerable amount of reticence in the type of dialogue that I was involved in, at the level that I was involved in. There was also in the newspapers, in the Tagespeil, in all these papers, there were very often very explicit and emphatic reservations expressed about the United States. I could remember in one of the newspapers called the Berliner Zeitung, a tabloid, that on August the 14th had a front page headline, Berlin is going to be sold down the river." So it was in the press and it was affecting public opinion without question.

Q: You say you had contact with USIA while you were there. What about it appealed to you?

FERNANDEZ: I knew about USIA from my Columbia years, already. What appealed to me was this sort of thing. In addition to this little group there was another thing that USIA organized with young German and American civilians called a Columbus Gesellschaft, The Columbus Society. It used to have two or three, I don't know exactly what number, of banquets each year, we'd eat down at the Hardt House, and a Fulbrighter would play the piano, and you'd get to see everybody far and wide. That, and Bob Voth, who was an assistant cultural affairs officer at the time, was just becoming a greater and greater friend and I became interested in it.

I was not very pleased with my Department of Army job and I began to talk to Bob about it. Back in those days when we had OMs, operation memorandum, Bob had sent in a CV that I prepared an application to go to USIA. It was really not until the following March that I was finally paneled and joined USIA. That's where the interest came, from people like Bob, Al Hemsey, and Ed Alexander. I knew these chaps rather marginally at the time. Of course, years later we became great friends. Al just passed away a couple years ago and Ed I just saw a few months ago.

Q: You came into USIA in 19...?

FERNANDEZ: In 1963. I was paneled in March and I was given my first assignment in...I can't recall, I'd have to really look that up. At any rate, I went down there as a Binational Center Grantee.

Q: "Down there" is where?

FERNANDEZ: To Chile, I'm sorry. My first assignment was Chile. During the period I was there they converted Binational Center Grantees to Foreign Service staff. That was in many respects the apogee of my career. While in Chile I was called up by the ambassador to be his staff aide. I had been there for four years and I was about to leave. One night at a party, Ambassador Ed Kory asked what job I might like to take if I were to stay on, because I had already been there for four years and USIA was thinking about my next assignment. I said, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, you know." I guess I'd had a couple of drinks. I said, "You know, I'd like to go up and be your staff aide." Of course the late Towney Friedman, who died a couple of years ago, was already in the job, so this was really a rather flippant comment. But I did say that to him, and I said, "The other thing is, I have to see whether my wife would want to stay." He said, "I've already spoken to her and she said it would be all right." So from there I went up into the political section.

Q: Let's move back to the... In the first place, when you came in in '63, was there any sort of oral exam or anything like that?

FERNANDEZ: Yes, I remember the oral exam I had. It was on March 19, 1963. I'll never forget it because it seemed like a great milestone. I had an oral exam with Rudolph Aggrey. He later became ambassador to Romania, where I served subsequently.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions or type of questions?

FERNANDEZ: Yes, broadly speaking, some of them I remember were things about "how would you explain the United States position in the state of play, or the situation report, sort of, on civil rights, what's going on." That's one question I remember. Then there were other questions about history, I really don't recall them.

Q: You were sent to the Binational Center. Had you spoken any Spanish at all before?

FERNANDEZ: Curiously, a little known fact is I didn't really speak Spanish. I had studied Spanish for a year in college. I heard some Spanish at home. But the first foreign language I learned to speak, as I say, really, was really German. When I got down there with my Spanish name [I worked with] the PAO, Barbara White, who was a lovely person.

Q: Later she was involved in a hostage take-over, didn't she, or not?

FERNANDEZ: No, that was much earlier. At any rate, Barbara was just appalled at what kind of Spanish I spoke and I was certainly embarrassed by it, in a way. When I took the exams at the old FSI, the oral exams in the two languages, my German score was far better than my Spanish. So when I got down there, she immediately put a tutor on me to get my Spanish up to date. By the time I left, I was at a 4-5 level speaking with a Chilean accent.

Q: You were doing this, what, 1963 to...

FERNANDEZ: 1963 to 1970...

Q: I'm talking about the Binational Center.

FERNANDEZ: That would be about 1963 to about 1966 or 1967. That's when I went on detail to State.

Q: Let's stick to the Binational Center. What were you doing? What was the Binational Center doing?

FERNANDEZ: This is a period, you know we had the Kennedy years right, even though Kennedy had been assassinated. It was early, probably January of 1964, that I went to Chile, because my son Mark had been born in 1963. What was going on, was still the momentum that was behind youth programs, as they called them.

In the Binational Center, my title was Director of University Relations. I had this little office and had all kinds of students in there all the time. The idea was to get access to the students and to put across our point of view. It was a well-financed program. In the beginning it had considerable amount of autonomy and I really took the fullest advantage of it and had a lot of fun. I worked very hard at it and I got to know a great number of students. The idea was to bring them in touch with the embassy, with the ambassador, with visitors. If you had a senator visiting you could go out to the university and had the contacts already. We would let people [visit] the U.S. ships that [participated in the UNITAS military exercises. These ships] would go up and down the west coast of South America and you'd come and you'd see the [ships and I] would be the one who would program all these trips.

That was the thrust of that work. There were exchanges involved to some extent and I worked on those. Basically, it was to be in touch with university student leaders. There was at the time the thing called the "potential leader biographic reporting list." At any rate, we were really interested in getting to these people. Among the programs that I organized, for example, I came to the United States at the time, with five student leaders of student federations, and there was money to do all this.

[I recall the presidential] elections of 1964 [between] Frei vs. Allende. There was concern to get out particularly the Christian Democrats. We're speaking of 1964, speaking about an idea called the "revolution in liberty." It was really sort of the second answer of the Cold War in Latin America. The first one having been in Colombia, trying to get some kind of stability and progress and democratization [down there] at the time. At any rate in the election of '64 there were the few contacts that I had been sent out to make with students. I was able to help some of them with some of the community development projects to help support the Frei government, in effect.

That election, of course, came out with Frei on top and there was great optimism and belief that we finally have an answer to Fidel Castro. The Christian Democrats of course, were great philosophers, great believers in a lot of the theology of politics and were an exciting group of people, but a difficult [group] to work with. They liked to distance [themselves] at the same time. They wanted their own identity and their own independence. In a few student programs we were trying to keep them on the path to a democratic system.

Q: What was your impression at that time, during later 1960s, of universities? Because one always hears about the universities as being hotbeds of Marxism. Of course, Allende was coming from that particular wing of political thought. During this time what was your impression of these institutions?

FERNANDEZ: The universities were highly, highly politicized. Of course, the people that I used to see, the students I used to see, were all one-thousand percent full-time politicians. As for the activity on the campuses, they were fought out along political party lines. People ran for office in the student federations, and down in the lower levels of the student organizations within the universities, with party affiliations that were very clearly known. Which made it kind of interesting because I got to know communists during that period. Young people that I would have into my home with these discussions with these visitors and such.

Universities were in considerable disarray. [Although they were] not as bad as [in] other Latin American universities, there was the business of the autonomy of the university so that the police couldn't go on to the university [campus]. Some [groups] became more radical than others. As for the extremes, to the nightmare of the communists, there was always the MIR, the Movimiento de Izquierdo de Visionario, which was a Cuban, Castro-oriented operation. That was a constant thorn in the sides of everyone, particularly the communists, because they hated to be outflanked on the left, but also for the Christian Democrats who felt they had to be responsive for some of these things, and had to respect the opinion of the communists. The charges would always come back to this, "You guys are just too intolerant of communists. You don't understand the Chilean communist [movement]."

Q: How did we respond? Were you under any restrictions as far as dealing with those identified as communists?

FERNANDEZ: No. In the programs I had at the time, no. There were actually people within the Christian Democratic Movement who were far enough to the left to be even to the left of communists. As much as I could deal with them, these were not people who were standing there with open arms just dying to see me. It took a lot of work to gain their confidence and [to] do things of interest to them. We had the resources to do it. Like books, for example. [We gave out] hundreds of copies of Paul Samuelson's important economic textbook. I never would go out to lunch to a university without doing this. We would set up libraries within dormitories and in departments and in the schools of journalism with books that would come from USIA and also from USAID.

Q: Were you able to talk to people from MIR, the Cuban thing?

FERNANDEZ: You know, not really. These people knew who I was and one of the things that happened to me during this period that was the result of the communists is that they put out a book called, I haven't thought about this in years, called Chile Invadido, "Chile Invaded." They began a series. It came out of a series that was carried in the communist newspaper which is called El Cilo. This newspaper alleged that I was a CIA agent. There was a CIA operation down there with the students, very faintly disguised, and widely recognized as being such. I can't think of the names of the people who were involved or the organization, but that was there too, and they tie this all in together. I was very aggressively going out to meet students and had books to give away, and had traveled in the United States to give away and such. They had sort of targeted the CIA. I always attributed the honors [that I got] in Washington [to this attack].

Q: What was your impression of the effectiveness of our travel program? I mean, with the Chileans who went to the United States and came back?

FERNANDEZ: There has to be an effect. It's not always quantifiable. It always seemed to me that this was one of those things like atmospheric pressure, you know it's there, but you can't really describe it. First of all, with these student leaders, there was not an all embracing instant reaction to any proposal that they travel to the United States. I remember how long it took to get together this project with all the federations [agreeing to] finally go. That was not something they would take to instantly. But there were a lot of people who were, let's say, less politicized who were just dying to go to the United States and would apply for any kind of program to do this.

Within the office that I had when I was the student affairs officer, there was someone who worked full time on these matters, on the Fulbright Program, for example. Then we had the American Field Services and Experiment in International Living. There, there was just a constant flow of people who would say "Yes, I want to go to the United States to study, whatever, and I want to stay there." Well, that wasn't our idea of what an exchange program should be. But there was never any difficulty in Chile that entirely qualified people to go into any field to come to the United States.

The universities were not the best in the world, but they prepared people very well in the sciences, in the arts, and they just tended to be a people who read a lot, and they had a great many family traditions of scholarship. There were some, it was still very much of a caste society in ways where the opportunity... you didn't see many people come out of the caves, las pobaciones, as they call them. These communities, the little shanty town communities, you didn't see many of them come out of there and go to the university. But in the other class, there was a [sizable] middle class that was well schooled, highly qualified to come to the United States and I would say to a person they would seem very, very, well accomplished and quite impressive.

Q: What was the impression that you were getting from your colleagues in USIA and the embassy of Allende during this time?

FERNANDEZ: There was no secret that we were for the opposition to Allende. This is the Cold War and this is very intense, and there was no disguising it. As I was mentioning earlier, there were times when the students expressed to me concerns that maybe we were just being too anti-communist and should be more open. But this is a period too, as far as U.S. policy is concerned, that the war in Vietnam is beginning to take off. There was a great deal of concern about that. The United States is putting all its resources in that. Here there are people in Chile needing housing and health care and so forth, and the United States wasn't in their view paying enough attention to these things. There was considerable concern about that.

Q: Was there much contact, or interest, or focus on the Chilean military at this particular time?

FERNANDEZ: That's a fascinating question. This is a really, in a sense of the time, unique situation for Latin America in that, since the 1930, I think it was 1931, the Chilean military had really been out of politics and there was a small revolt. Now this is Chile, the end of my career there in 1969 or so, in one of the barracks, where one general whose name escapes me, where he was in effect starting up what looked to be an incipient coup, certainly a challenge to Frei and the presidency. The curious thing about all that was, nobody really knew where in the hell these barracks were.

That [uprising], of course, developed its head of steam. There were later versions of it. There was a General Vio. I don't think he actually ran for the presidency... I just don't recall. But he was a general up in the north, in Antofagasta. Curiously, preparing notes on all this later, and recent years with Tom Boyatt, who had been posted up there, he knew Vio. Well, that was unique information, knowledge of contact. On the political side of the embassy, once this all broke [out, it] was forbidden [for] the ambassador to have contact with these guys. At that time I was already in effect in the political section, I was the ambassador's staff aide. But our injunction was not to get involved in that.

Q: In the Cold War, was it Cuba who was carrying the water for the Soviets completely there?

FERNANDEZ: I'm trying to answer this in terms of what is the contact between two countries. When president Frei was inaugurated, in 1964, he then opened up relations and expanded them with the East. I remember having contact with my fellow second secretaries at the Russian embassy. We had organization called the Cinculo de Diplomáticos, at any rate, we were junior officers and a guy from the CIA was organizing the thing, and I used to see these guys on that circuit from time to time, but no extensive dialogue with them or anything. These were always very social, and such. Who was carrying all the water for them? Well, the Chilean communists, Luis Horvelan was one of their big leaders. Another one was Melodio Teitelbein. They were part of the political system and very, very prominent. They were carrying the Chilean flag I'd say. But there was always, of course, in what they were doing something that would really would work itself out to the benefit of the communists. The other extreme, the Castroites, were probably quite anti-social. If one looks back into the soul of these people, they were really for revolutionary change and they were, as I was saying, to the left of the communists. They carried their own water, and tended to be rather divisive in terms of fragmenting the left spectrum of the Christian Democratic Party.

That had the consequences that we saw in the election of 1970 where Tomich, trying to be the good leftist, was taking the position that led to the election of Allende [as president]. The real danger of all that was not very clear. But lurking in the background through this period was, of course, the military, and eventually in '73 the Pinochet takeover. I was long gone by then.

Q: Was there much of an Indian or indigenous population in Chile?

FERNANDEZ: There is. Chile is, in a way one of the least Indian countries of the area. Of the Andean region, compared to Bolivia or Peru, certainly, very, very clearly. But the Chileans were very, very brutal with their Indians. The Auracanians as they were called. They were just plain executed. There still tended to be, within Chile, very strong racial-based prejudice. There were several Indian artists that I remember, who were sort of descendent of Auracanians. But there tended to be, depending on the color of your skin, prejudice about this. At the top it's a very Europeanized country in terms of its leadership. There is a great German minority brought over in the 1930s to develop agriculture. There was the sort of Yugoslav minority. Among the sort of Spanish types, the Basques had their own thing. They had enormous enterprises, they had their own social clubs and such. There was a small Asturian circle. But, basically, Frei was a Swiss German, Tomich was really Yugoslav, or whatever Yugoslav was, Serbo-Croatian back then. Well, that's the sort of immersion, I wouldn't call it a melting pot.

Q: Turning to the time you were the ambassador's aide, this was about '68 to when?

FERNANDEZ: 1968 to 1970. Maybe 1967 to 1970.

Q: First, you talked a bit about Ed Kory, because he's a fairly prominent figure. What was your impression, how did he work?

FERNANDEZ: He was, in a very big way, my patron. It was he who came in, suggested I stay on, because I already had two tours with USIA. Ed Kory is still living, I gather, in Charlottesville. I have not seen or heard from him in many, many years. He was the European editor of Look magazine. In the Kennedy years he was ambassador to Ethiopia and wrote the famous Kory report, which said, "Close down the embassies, you've got too many in the world." He was not very popular in that sense. He came to Chile succeeding Ralph Dungan. Now, I know you want me to talk about Kory, but I just want to give a word about Dungan. You asked about Kory and I thought we should back up to Ralph Dungan. Ralph Dungan had worked in the White House for Kennedy, I think basically in the personnel area.

Q: Appointments, or something like that, wasn't it?

FERNANDEZ: I think he had something to do with personnel. At any rate, when [President] Johnson came in, of course, you had [a decision] what do you do with him. Well, send him to Chile. Ralph Dungan was very interesting and still living, I gather... He was very oriented toward the Christian Democrats. Really sort of under his time I think our relations with other political parties, the radical party, for example, and with the right, with the conservatives and liberals. Those relations sort of dried up somewhat. So Ed Kory came and bang, he was going to broaden these contacts and did it very aggressively. I think quite rightly, because I think we should always be in touch with the whole spectrum, if they have any influence. I can say many positive things about Ralph Dungan, but I want to say one thing which sounds rather negative.

At any rate, Ed Kory was a very dynamic journalist. It's what his training was. His father was a medical doctor in New York, and Ed Kory was a journalist through and through. He loved to sit down and do his cables with a green copy and all of the carbon and everything, and sit down and tap them out. Always did that, and always had very strong views on things. Sometimes they would appear a bit too simplistic. The high or low point of his leadership, and this is a man for whom I have great respect because he was my patron, is when the elections of 1970 were coming up and I was on the team from the political section with John Karkashian and Arnie Eisitz and Towney Friedman, and we'd split up the country and were following the elections. Preceding them were the elections of March 1969, the congressional elections. The four of us had been there and I had one little...the third district in Santiago and two of the northern provinces, Arique and Carapaca, to become the expert on in terms of what was going on. I went there for these elections. What we found by the time we got to the 1969 elections, we pretty much called it. We pretty much - I say "we," the political section - called them quite correctly. I remember making a few good guesses up north of my own that it worked out with a senator called Aguin who got elected a Christian Democrat. It was a very complicated, daunting electoral system that was really quite difficult to make guesses about sometimes. You'd do it by the seat of your pants.

At any rate, back to Ed Kory. On the eve of the September 1970 elections, I can remember it was that Thursday or Friday before, we got together. Towney, may he so rest in peace, was such a thoroughly good political officer and so astute, was putting together our numbers. We didn't know each other's numbers. He put them all together and he came up with those and said, "You know, Allende is going to win." Well, we took that in, and I can remember the long discussion we had with Kory about this, and he said, "I don't think that's going to happen. I think that Alexandre is going to win." Well, it turned out he was wrong. Then, to his credit, I remember, he sent a cable afterward the elections saying, "You know, my guys told me that Allende was going to win and I didn't believe it."

We had specific numbers. There are great electoral roles in Chile. There was a lot of electoral data to work with from way back, volumes of material that you go to try to trace patterns of voting and such. At any rate, that was a miscall on Kory's part. Kissinger, who was then up in Chicago the day after the election made the comment about it that the outcome was not to the U.S.' liking because the communist coalition, communist-supported coalition, had won. Well, the rest became history. I left shortly after that election. I left in December and the election was in September. Things sort of lumbered along. I think Nat Davis was the next ambassador who went down there. Ed Kory came back and went to the UN, US-UN and I have forgotten where else he went after that. At any rate, he is, I was telling you, one who certainly helped me and gave me a great experience in the front office.

Q: What was the feeling about...we're moving up to, now, the election of '70, actually a sort of a mano a mano, a split vote. This was how Allende got in. Was there concern on our part about Allende and prior to the election were we trying to get the people to the right of Allende to sort of get it together so you wouldn't sneak in with a...?

FERNANDEZ: I think in our chatter it was clear we could see some of these dangers from the prognostication that we made, you know, four political officers. It was clear from that. But I wouldn't know how to describe what was at work here other than there were several explanations. I think one of them was that we said that the right, which couldn't stand Tomich, and Allende won by a very small margin. Part of it was attributable to the right, that would say, "I can't stand Tomich. I know Alexandre won't win, I'm going to vote for him, anyway." Of course, in that close election Tomich came in, I think he came in third, but it was really 20,000 votes that cost him. As I recall, our explanation in part was that the right had [perhaps] yawed away without realizing that this by default electing Allende. That just did it. Tomich came in third trying to be very radical, trying to make sure he wasn't identified with the right, that he wasn't saying things that Allende [said to] the right. Unless somebody said, "If we don't get this guy, we're going to get Allende."

Q: What was the feeling after Allende was elected prior to your departure? What was he going to do or was the feeling that he might have won, but it was by such a margin that he really didn't have much power. How did you feel?

FERNANDEZ: One of the other pieces of what I would call the conventional wisdom at the time was that the Allende coalition with the near radicals or the communists, that this really did not have a possibility of working out based on the traditional system of sort of patronage politics. The pie was going to be sliced up too thinly. It was just too diffuse a coalition. There were always obstacles to carrying out whatever policy or there was a thrust in carrying out policy that wasn't favorable to strengthening the coalition. It was all sort of individualistic sort of party-oriented positions that were taken. Well, after a lot of that, then the coalition of course, just fell apart and that's why Pinochet took over. Was it March of 1973? I'm not sure of the date anymore. I was back here by then. At any rate, the coalition that Allende won with was not a very coherent one and it would have been very, very difficult to govern with that.

Q: Did you have any feel at this time, because it became controversial latter on, about the role of the CIA or the information you were getting? I mean, did you get anything for this, or was this just not much of a factor?

FERNANDEZ: If I remember it, I would really kind of be speaking out of school here because you are going to [an area where] there is a confidentiality about this. My sense of it was that the CIA was far more aggressive program against Allende than in support of Tomich. That's just my recollection. Or [the recollection of] Alexandre. Certainly a more aggressive program to assure that the communist-supported coalition would not win. Allende, you know, was a socialist.

Q: We're now into the early Nixon period. Nixon was not, obviously, paying much attention to Latin America except probably for Chile, and maybe after the fact. Did you have the feeling in your reporting as the election came on that one should be pretty well tailoring one's reporting to meet... or did you feel pressure from Washington?

FERNANDEZ: I would sort of hesitate to express an opinion, but it seems to me that some of that reporting was not by the professional officers. I think Kory might have been sort of...

Q: Also his journalistic background...

FERNANDEZ: But in the wrong way, because in saying that Allende was going to win, yes, that's a nice comforting thing to say, but then to be that far off. You know, you could always go back and say, "Well, no, I said here... if you read that whole report there is this point here I make and I really told him what the outcome would be. But the extent to which he did that, to satisfy the administration I'm not sure, frankly. It was very sensational reporting. He was always writing like a wire service reporter.

Q: This may be it. This tends to push you into a non-qualifying corner. You have to come down on one side or the other, but you say he was trying to open up. Did he seem from your perspective, to have much contact with Allende or was there much?

FERNANDEZ: I really don't recall whether he had actually had contact with Allende, but I know that John Karkashian did. I was always fascinated with the situation and waited for John to come back and talk.

Q: John was who?

FERNANDEZ: John was the political consular. He spoke with Allende...let's see, my recollection at least twice, maybe more. A very, very astute officer with a lot of experience in Central America. I don't know where John is now.

Q: How do you spell his name?

FERNANDEZ: K-A-R-K-A-S-H-I-A-N. He was the political counselor. Now the other guys were, Towney, who unfortunately died, and Arnie Eisitz, who is retired someplace in the area now. Now, in all of this, maybe I should just insert this parenthetically, one guy who was just so terrific and has remained a life-long influence on me is Harry Shlaudeman. I know you've talked to Harry. He knows a good bit more about any of this than I do. But Harry was there too, and his recollections have a lot more depth to them and his knowledge would have a lot more depth than my own. Although I sat right out the office, you know, outside the ambassador's door.

Q: Did you find as the ambassador's aide that there was sort of a gnashing of teeth between the political section and the ambassador as they looked at things and the ambassador tending to more or less tending to sensationalize sort of the political reporting process or not?

FERNANDEZ: I would think the answer to that is yes, there was a certain sensationalism to his reporting. Another chap to mention in this era is Joe Norbury who is still around. I didn't see his name on the list. N-O-R-B-U-R-Y. He left well before the election, but during this period and Kory's, he would certainly have some interesting insights to his style and in his emphasis in this particular area, of reporting. But there was a rather general feeling, and certainly, I felt, as one who never even worked as a political officer (the only time I ever worked as a political officer, in fact, although I'm politically interested and oriented), I think their feeling was that some of this stuff really was a little sensational.

Q: You left there in 1970. Where did you go?

FERNANDEZ: Then I went to Fletcher School.

Q: You were in Fletcher for when? '70, '71?

FERNANDEZ: All o'71. Then in January of '72... I had wanted to stay up there and finish a Ph.D. I did a paper on communism and Castroism in Chile. I haven't looked at the thing in 21 years. That's one of the things I did at Fletcher. Also, just to get the damn thing out of my system. Latin America became in my mind, something like the old Schleswig-Holstein problem did for Bismarck, and I don't want to talk about it. Although I did write that paper and I did then turn my interests back to Eastern Europe because that's where I wanted to go next, and to international finance, to learn something about trade and monetary policy, in which I had no training.

Q: Let's talk a little bit about Fletcher. I thought then we might stop at that point for the time. At Fletcher, what were you taking? This is the school of...?

FERNANDEZ: Fletcher School of Law and Policy. I went there really sort of half recruited by somebody who came through as a USIA inspector, Bob Delaney, who was then the head of the Murrow Center. This seemed like an exciting area for me to work in because it was my main interest. We were just beginning to call it public diplomacy. At any rate, when I got there I found the kind of work they were doing in this center and Bob Delaney had left [in the meantime and was replaced by] an expert on Korea who has since passed away. He was the head of the center and I saw some of the work they were doing and I just didn't take much interest in that and I didn't take any work at all in that area although as a USIA officer that is what I was sent out to do.

What I did was to go to courses on Eastern Europe and on Russia and courses in economics, trade and finance, trade and monetary policy. It was a marvelous period. It opened my mind and you didn't have pink slips, telephone, or yellow slips or whatever you call it. It was a great decompression after these very intensive years in Chile. I studied with Bill Griffith and Lori Ranan and other people up there. George Holland was the economics professor I did most of my work with.

Q: Did you find Fletcher had a thrust as far as Eastern Europe was concerned?

FERNANDEZ: Oh, yes. I think it was a Cold War oriented...talk about Bill Griffith and Lori Ranan. Well, I think sort a lot of academia tended to have that thrust [that was] critical of U.S. policy, yes, because they didn't think we knew enough about the inner workings of these societies and such. Basically in that period, names I mentioned of people you could consider Cold Warriors.

Q: One of the things that became very apparent after the collapse of the Soviet Empire in the early 1990s was how awful the economic system was and what a terrible legacy, including even that of East Germany, which was sort of held up as being...I think we're trying to look for something challenging within that society. Were you getting the real enormity of the results of the Soviet system?

FERNANDEZ: I guess to an extent. I think in that period there still tended to be many who felt, and I think the CIA did, that the Soviet Union was nine feet tall. As far as what was going on within these societies, the corruption, and the persecution, the lack of political democracy, the economic stagnation, the political rot, that was underway, I think that was certainly conveyed but not in the sense that it was all going to end. You're going to have a new day, I don't think that was being taught. There was a lot of looking back at the Hungarian riots and the Czech period in '68 and so forth, and yes, you had police states that were holding their own, but were not progressing dramatically economically, just behind technologically.

Q: Why don't we stop at this point. You got out of Fletcher in...

FERNANDEZ: I was commuting for one period because I wanted the kids to finish school. So that must have been in 1972, from January to June I went back and forth, then I went to work on Problems of Communism Magazine.

Q: All right, then, why don't we pick it up around '72 on Problems of Communism?

In today's session off, Aury wants to make an addendum.

FERNANDEZ: Yes, I thought it would be interesting to add in terms of talking about Ed Kory, the cancellation of the visit of Nelson Rockefeller to Chile. Now the year escapes me, but it must be somewhere around 1969. Rockefeller was off on this visit to various Latin American countries. He had encountered, I forgot in which northern tier countries, considerable public protest. The question was, what kind of a protest, or what kind of reception would he get in Chile. I guess the point I really want to make about all this is, is that Kory, outrageously, in my view, and not catering just to administration policies, suggested, "We don't need the trip," and the visit was canceled. I think it's an illustration of a variety of things, but certainly, the courage, I would call it, of Ed Kory at the time to say, "This visit should not take place." We couldn't have gotten enough police protection to make it come off. I just thought I would add that. It's a period and I think it describes something.

Q: These would have been demonstrations, again, from the left.

FERNANDEZ: From the left.

Q: I think Rockefeller was sort of the target of opportunity for the left as he made one of his really rather frequent trips. I think he was there as a special emissary, or something.

FERNANDEZ: Oh, yes, this goes back to OSS, back to World War II.

Q: This time it was a rather tumultuous period. He was sort of the lightning rod for the left at that particular time.

FERNANDEZ: He was a good enough target. There was something earlier worth mentioning, too, which goes back to the time of Ralph Dungan. Bobby Kennedy came to Chile, and I remember with John Siegenthaler and Richard Goodwin, all these chaps. He, of course, was of great interest to people. But the communists, I remember one event that I set up, now this must be about 1966 or 1967. I remember we set up in a big student meeting and the MIR in this meeting, a thousand or some students, was protesting against Kennedy, and Kennedy was saying, "Well, you might have a few communists up there, who might protest what I'm saying, but going I'm to say one thing or another," and they just booed him down because they said, those were not communists, those were people to the left of the communists and they have a right to speak, too. For what that's worth. That was, again, I think an example of the atmospherics that one dealt with in that period with the whole political spectrum.

Q: We'll pick this up once again when you came in '72 to deal with Problems of Communism.

Today is September 2, 1997. You said that before we leave the Fletcher time, there were a couple of things you wanted to add.

FERNANDEZ: One is during that period, my earlier comments about what I encountered there, what they were doing in academia, pertaining to this: one was that when I went there I wanted to look at something about international development I found most of the training and most of the perspective was really on the immorality of the United States by not giving more foreign aid. It was really very strange, preachy type of stuff. There was some quantitative stuff going on, but in general I was very disappointed that I couldn't learn more about the matter of our foreign assistance programs and how anyone should conduct them anyplace and how you do foreign assistance in another culture. This is a great disappointment which I've never really found anything that addressed the kinds of questions that came up when we were in Chile and were doing a rather large-scale foreign assistance program.

The second thing during that period was sort of the relationship of academia to foreign affairs is the matter of the Sino-Soviet rift. This was something in the views of everything I learned up there, that really came out of the work in academia. In part, I remember a lot of the literature put together by Bill Griffith and others. This was certainly very relevant and ahead of the curve... information and knowledge that helped shape our foreign relations.. The third thing was, during this period the Chinese had the...not the People's Republic, but what we called communist China, went into the United Nations and it was just an ideal period to study a lot about the dynamics of what was going on at the time and I remember attending a number of lectures and seminars and following very closely the mechanics of how the PRC came into being.

Q: The "PRC" being People's Republic of China.

FERNANDEZ: The People's Republic of China, yes...and how the Albanians helped the Chinese get in through the United Nations there being their only contact on the ground. All this is rather interesting and enlightening for me as a student or as a practitioner of foreign affairs. Those were just a couple of points I think about that experience that was just so important to me and so interesting and something I was terribly gratified by and for because USIA really didn't have any kind of specific training program to develop a career or anything. I had this whole year off to go off and pursue my interests as I was able to do mainly in the field of East European, Soviet studies, and also international finance.

Q: All right, we're now in '72 and you're out, and...

FERNANDEZ: This is in January of 1972.

Q: What were you up to?

FERNANDEZ: Well, now I'd completed the four years that they gave me at Fletcher. I continued to commute back and forth because my kids were up there finishing school for a year. I came back and was assigned to Problems of Communism Magazine and the position of editor/writer. The real objective behind bringing me down for that position, I say down from Boston to Washington, was to help create, originally, a similar journal for Latin America. In view of the experience I just had in Chile and all of my own interests in the academic work I had done, the feeling was that I could perhaps come together with some ideas that would serve to create a Problems of Communism-type publication for Latin America instead of just translating Problems of Communism.

Q: Could you explain a bit of the history of Problems of Communism? This is the title of a sort of a magazine.

FERNANDEZ: Right. Problems of Communism really started out in the depths or the heights of the Cold War as really a propaganda vehicle. It was just banging away. I think the first editor was Abe Brumberg. I can't recall the precise year in which it began. By the time I went on to work with it, it was already a well-established journal. It was superbly edited.

Q: It was quite respected. It was no longer a propaganda vehicle.

FERNANDEZ: It was not at all. It was a good scholarly journal. It had any number of points of view, but basically, it was to point out what problems of communism were. It was a very interesting period from the standpoint of U.S. policy and foreign affairs. Detente was upon us and the Problems of Communism theme then in those years became cooperation not confrontation. Naturally, we had to be in tandem...the publication had to be in tandem with what administration policy was. There was certainly no reason why the U.S. government should be financing some publication that was against administration policy. This was far from that.

It was a great marketplace of ideas. It was thoroughly researched articles. Thoroughly edited articles by some extraordinarily capable editors like David Albright. But these were all well-schooled people and well-experienced editors who made real masterpieces out of each article. It covered the whole world, of course, but there was always a good stress on Russia, on the Soviet Union, and Central and Eastern Europe. It was just a widely respected publication. I was greatly honored and flattered to be asked to go on to work with them.

So as for the publication, that is to say, the Latin American PLC, as they were calling it as a working concept, that never came into being, it never really took shape. I never felt qualified to do it in the first place, because I didn't know that much about all the literature about Latin America, which publications we were going to be complementing or competing with or anything. I think the funding was rather flimsy also.

Q: What was the feeling that the initial thing of Problems of Communism was so loaded towards central Europe and the Soviet Union, and I suppose, China, that it wouldn't have the same resonance in Latin America? Was that the problem?

FERNANDEZ: Well, I think yes, that was really the feeling. That while, while they were, the PLC was covering the world. You could read about Vietnam, Cuba, you could read about all these subjects. The feeling was that many of the things that were going on in Latin America themselves deserved a lot more attention. A lot more salient attention along the lines of what Problems of Communism was doing. I don't know where and in what circles and at what level the decision was made to abandon the project. I just think we never really got our thoughts together on it. Sufficiently, clearly, to go ahead and say, "Well, this is the way we'll do the magazine." Although we did a few papers on it, and I don't even know where they are anymore. But we never really got very far.

Q: Well, then, how long were you working on this concept?

FERNANDEZ: I worked on that, it seemed to me, from about January to maybe the fall or summer of 1972.

Q: I was wondering, while I was still on that subject, did you...Henry Kissinger was riding high at this point still as National Security Advisor, but detente was the buzz word, detente meaning...you better explain that.

FERNANDEZ: Detente meaning there was going to be a relaxation of tensions. Being a French word I guess that's the closest you could say. That we would begin to relax the tensions in our relations as thoroughly as we could and that we would do this across the board. It was a long and hard process, never ending, because elements of detente that remain as objectives are still there. It was the beginnings of trying to sort of defuse the Cold War a little bit.

Q: Did you feel any of...you were the new boy on the block in this publication, and often the new boy, the new girl gets a real feel for the atmospherics. That somebody who's been there too long accepts as normal. Did you get any feel with the people involved in this of any of the tensions that were going on? Because we really were trying to change course. Were we trying to moderate what was going on, and that sort of thing.

FERNANDEZ: I would say the chaps working with at that time, I've already mentioned David Albright, I'd mention Paul Smith who then became the editor. Apparently at one time, they were talking to me about becoming the editor of Problems of Communism itself, which I never felt anywhere near, and was not anywhere near qualified for. But they had talked to me about possibly being that. At any rate, on this staff with Paul Smith, David, and a couple of other chaps, there was a great deal of sensitivity.

It was just as exciting as really being at Fletcher and seminars rather than being at a government office to work on Problems of Communism at that time because they were sensitive to the need to be responsive because this was [a magazine that] described, explained and defended United States foreign policy. So this had to be worked out in order to keep in tandem with what policy was. And I think these chaps were absolutely brilliant at doing this, because they had very good ideas. Of course, in some respects, based on what I said earlier, this shouldn't have been a problem because it was an objective scholarly journal. Now there were the politically incorrect who didn't say it that way in those days. Things that you wouldn't introduce, but it was not polemical. It was not rhetorical.

Q: Did you get any feel about people saying, "Well we can't take something from what is it, Herbert Marcuse, or somebody of the fairly far left," or...?

FERNANDEZ: I don't think those people were in that. No, Herbert Marcuse was never, ever in PLC and I don't think he'd want to be. I think in a way now that we're thinking this out loud, that it was very easy for these people wouldn't want to be associated with PLC and there were people in academia who wouldn't want to be on it. You know, it's a government propaganda journal.

Q: Did you get any feel, because you're dealing with...the main contributors were from academia, I assume.

FERNANDEZ: That's right.

Q: Did you have any feel for how, you might say, the left wing of the academic world versus the right wing people involved in foreign affairs? While the United States would be considered...our policy together, Nixon and Kissinger would be to the right... the academic world in international affairs... a lot of the professors were sort of playing around with parlor Marxism or whatever you want to call it.

FERNANDEZ: Well, you know, there are two points. I don't want to get to the second one, because when I get going on it...I want to speak about China policy, second. First, in answer to your question about academia and the left and right, where I saw this the strongest was the place that was close to where I was working, was in the Latin American area. These people coming to Latin America, coming to Chile, and doing all of these articles and all of this speculation and all of this criticism about the United States and Santo Domingo, another Panama, and Cuba and you just name it all. There was a very substantial body of scholars in the Latin American area. I only had contact with them in the United States a couple of times at a couple of conferences during my Fletcher time. Of course, I was just caught featherless by these guys. Coming up and presenting what the United States view was of the Chilean elections, and so forth. But there it was, extremely strong. I wasn't very good scholarship.

If there were any icon of that era that would first come to mind, it would be somebody like Regis Dubray, the Frenchman who was the great Che Guevara. He was more than a Castroite. These people tended to shape a lot of the agenda. They were all very attractive. They used fancy, colorful language. They tended to attract a lot of attention and supporters and believers. So, on that part I can only say it was really only the Latin American area. In other areas, I didn't really have that much of a handle that I can recall as I did in this one area. Because it was really quite testy. Something that we were looking at the time we are talking about for Latin America sort of political science, Problems of Communism journal.

Also during this period there were changes that occurred in academia and positions in foreign affairs that were quite remarkable. The one I was mentioning earlier about China, when all of academia, all these years were saying, "Recognize Red China, recognize Red China" and bang, they did it. The air goes out of the balloon, and they have to regroup. It left a lot of homeless scholars from all of the work they were doing. This wasn't all they were doing. What they were saying and doing was a great deal that made great sense. But just the way the arguments were focused in public, it made it look as though these guys want you to recognize Red China, you take the air out of their balloon and then it just collapses.

Q: Well in, say, late 1972 you left this job because they decided not to do a Latin American issue. Where did you go?

FERNANDEZ: Then I went to the East European area of USIA. It was called IIE. This area was headed by Kempton Jenkins at the time. Jenks, a State Department Foreign Service Officer.

Q: Whom I've interviewed, by the way.

FERNANDEZ: I noticed, yes. Well, Jenks brought me over to there because it was clear to my mind that the future of Problems of Communism wasn't something I looked forward to and I really wasn't that committed to and I was looking for another assignment. Then they wanted to start shaping officers to go overseas in Eastern Europe and I had a big interest in doing this. While I was at Fletcher, I got to know Jenks at that time so he got me a job in his shop as the Romanian and Hungarian country affairs officer.

Q: You were doing this from late 1972...?

FERNANDEZ: That must have been about mid, sort of summer or fall of 1972. In the summer of 1974, after I had Romanian language training, I was assigned to Bucharest. At any rate, the Hungarian and Romanian issue at the time was very interesting. We did not mention, in talking about Problems of Communism that U.S. policy at the time was one of differentiation. They wouldn't say "the Iron Curtain country" if you were a scholar or a diplomat because you knew each of these countries was very, very different. There was this desire to encourage and treat each country according to its qualities. Hungary and Romania turned out to be two very interesting ones.

Hungary was four-square, the problem was the Crown of St. Stephen. It was a country that had already, here we're talking about the early 1970s, already since 1968 they had brought in the new economic mechanism, the NIM. Which I understand in Hungarian means "NO." But the NIM was really a form of internal economic organization that was really quite unorthodox vis a vis the Soviet Union. So we had these two countries I was dealing with. Hungary internally had a very unorthodox domestic policy, and Romania, which had a very orthodox internal policy, more like Russia's than Hungary's. Then in foreign affairs, Hungary was orthodox and Romania was unorthodox. It was the real maverick and it was the country that more U.S. senators were visiting in those years.

Beginning with the Soviet invasion of 1968 in Prague, [President Nicolae] Ceausescu already said that he condemned this. There were no Soviet troops on Romanian soil. There were some training exercises going on in the Warsaw Pact, but it was not a very serious commitment. We had these two countries we're dealing with. One which is a real thorn in the side internationally, of the Soviet Union, the other one which was pretty orthodox, Hungary, which was very obedient to the Soviets. So there were two interesting countries to work with, two entirely different problems posed for the United States at the time. I was then preparing to go to Bucharest as the PAO, so it was a marvelous insight.

Q: Let's talk about Hungary first. What had been in '56 the Hungarian revolt, and had been put down quite brutally, where did Hungary kind of fit into our policy? You might explain what the crown of St. Stephen's was and why that was an issue and then what were some other issues that one was dealing with from the USIA's perspective.

FERNANDEZ: Okay. To begin with the crown of St. Stephen, I hope I'm not too vague or misleading or imprecise. The crown of St. Stephen was the real icon, of Hungarian, of Magyar nationalism. Magyars spread over, it's the only country Hungary, in the world, almost, that's surrounded by its own peoples. It has minorities all around it to this day. Now, what the crown symbolized, was their own independence and their own sense of identity and they wanted it back. The crown had been taken out after World War II to Fort Knox and was sitting there. Every time we turned around, we said, "Let's have a cultural visit." You see, as part of U.S. policy at that time in the 1970s, it was a very aggressive and active program of trying to open up relations within these countries, cultural, domestic, and scientific, educational. In other words, to open up those societies, too.

Well, whenever you'd turn to Hungary to do this, you would run up against the crown. There was always the complaint on the part of the Hungarians and you get this throughout Eastern Europe and throughout the world of a certain asymmetry. They'd say, "Well, why, we send you our national symphony orchestra, why don't you send us yours?" They wanted the big cultural and political stars and all the attention on their country because they were coming here and giving us attention. Well, this asymmetry as we used to describe it was something very, very difficult to handle. You could always go back and say, well, you need to argue values and such, and anyway, very little got off the ground with Hungary until the U.S. returned the crown.

Q: When did that happen?

FERNANDEZ: I'm trying to think of when that is and it just escapes me.

Q: Was it during your watch?

FERNANDEZ: Oh, no, it was long after. It would seem to me in the late 1970s, early 1980s, something easy enough to look up, but I'm embarrassed to say I don't recall it because it was a very important event.

Q: Why were we keeping the crown? What were our conditions during the time you were dealing with this?

FERNANDEZ: My description would be so superficial. I'm afraid that it's been so long since I really thought about it very much. The feeling was that this was...I don't want to describe it as war booty...for whatever reasons we felt that we should hang on to it. Of course, I guess the basic motivation in very general terms was that you had a chip in your hand and you've got to wait to play it at the right time and make sure you don't just toss it away. I think that in fact is what happened. That after the crown was returned then there was an expanding of relations and activity by organizations like the U.S. Information Agency in Hungary.

Q: Do you recall how we viewed Hungary as far as its internal dealing with not just the economic side, as you've mentioned, but dealing with its people. Was there a lightening of the load?

FERNANDEZ: No, I think there was always the sense that there was a lot of superficial give and take in the political process and there was this sort of real flexibility relatively speaking, in the economic side. But the country was still a police state. It still had a certain amount of totalitarian qualities to it that you knew it and you wouldn't consider it to be a free society.

Q: What about Romania? Ceausescu had been in now since 1965, and so he was well in place. In later years he came in for considerable criticism for being too tolerant of that regime. How did we feel about it during 1972 to 1974?

FERNANDEZ: You see, right there is one the momentum was in full force. In the summer or fall of 1963 Romania became a member of the IMF and the IVIU. I remember the ceremony only too well at the State Department and seeing the documents that were signed after World War II....the accession to the IMF which included signatures from Czechoslovakia and from Poland. Then, of course the Russians said "No show," and all. At any rate, as part of this opening of relations with Romania and giving them a chance, although we knew their internal system was rotten and totalitarian and a police state, and a state of goons, it was in our interests to have this state flourish as best it could, certainly on the international field as part of bringing it out of the communist yoke, if you want to put it in those simplistic terms. So Romania got a lot of attention and Romania was responsive in a lot of different areas if only superficially. For example, with Romania we had a cultural exchanges agreement. It was kind of a long-range scientific, technical, educational, sports, museums exchanges agreement, the whole Balkan litany of types of relations. Now this particular agreement, which I think was first negotiated in 1972 - I'm not entirely certain of the year - enabled the United States to establish a library outside the premises of the embassy in Bucharest. About two and a half, three blocks away, they got a building and set up this library. So it was the only Warsaw Pact country with an off-premises library, although we had a rather sizable library in our embassy in Poland. We also had a small one in Hungary that I remember seeing.

At any rate, this is what was going on with Romania at the time. This exchange agreement tended to be at the heart of everything that we were trying to do with the Romanians at the time. I went there to Romania then in the summer of 1974 and was there until the summer of 1976. The exchanges agreement tended to be the focus of our activities with the Romanians and it was all so bureaucratized. It was also run by the Ministry of Interior. We would meet, for example, Harry Barnes will certainly have this in his thoughts with you and I'm sure [our then DCM] Dick Viets must have mentioned it in his. But we had within that agreement, for example, provisions for the exchanges that they would want or they should facilitate.

For example, the Iowa writers' workshop. There was always a position there. Well, I don't know how many times in the first months I was there I met up with the deputy foreign minister and then another office they had for cultural and scientific relations which was not the Ministry of Education, trying to get a visa for this one person to go as a writer to the Iowa writers' workshop. "Nicodata," as the Romanians say, "Never." They wouldn't give this man a visa. But man, would they ever like to send somebody over here to study mathematics or physics, or chemistry, or any of the hard sciences. So this is what we were fighting with them all the time, trying to do more on the softer side to the social sciences.

Some people came in, to be sure, in the years I was there, from IREX, there was a person, Mary Ellen Fisher, who did a very competent biography of Ceausescu for her Ph.D. at Harvard. There was an exchange couple that we had. Not an exchange, really, but someone who came there really on his own with his wife and family, John Vok, V-O-K. We just spent time with in Vermont with him and one of his sons and his wife. He was studying land use. John Vok was responsible for all the legal work for the Boston Harbor. They let him in. He was around, he got in here and in there, but it was a lot of shuffling. Very, very difficult to crack into any of these areas that didn't deal with the hard sciences. That's where they really wanted to have all of the exchanges. Social sciences, I'd say, they'd want to leave that behind.

Q: When you were in our embassy in Bucharest, from 1974 to 1976, what was the situation as you saw it there during that period in Romania?

FERNANDEZ: You know, looking back on it, several years later, people said these were really halcyon times. There was a lot more freedom, you could get more food or it always seemed that way. Actually, it was very oppressive. It was, just from the start. I had been to Romania once, earlier, escorting a congressman there, while I was a desk officer. Joel Wagner of Plainviewing, Louisiana. I had to take him to Bucharest, I think it was in November of '71 or '72.

When I arrived there in July of 1974 there was a world population conference on. Casper Weinberger, I remember at the time, was Secretary of HEW, as it was then called. I was just overwhelmed by what I encountered on the ground in terms of making arrangements for the Secretary's visit, what would go on and where meetings would be and everything. It was my first real movement around Bucharest and in Romania around groups of people. I remember coming back to the first country team meeting and saying to Ambassador Harry Barnes, "You know, this is the most goon-infested society I've ever been in." I mean, you just can spot it all over the place. I did the first time I was in the East in 1971 and went to the Soviet Union. You could see goons around you all over the place. I guess maybe some of the training I had in intelligence when I was in the Army and I'd surveillance and you'd sort of pick 'em out. But there was no attempt to hide any of this.

What sorts of things would they do? Well, [for example], they would take hold of all of the Arab students and they'd take them all out of town when a [particular foreign] visitor [came to Bucharest]. It was just a very, very suppressed society. It was impossible to initiate a contact with somebody who was not cleared by the security police. The example I have, and this exchanges agreement that I mentioned, we had negotiations here in Washington about that agreement. [break in tape]

So that reference to Casper Weinberger that really was during the...

Q: ...'70s, when he was working...he was HEW Secretary in the Nixon Administration.

FERNANDEZ: In 1974. We were on the point about how that event dramatized for me how thoroughly infested and suppressive and totalitarian a police state, the society was. In 1974, I think it was in the spring of 1974, we had negotiations here for the exchanges agreement. I met a man, I remember his name was Demechu Tranza, T-R-A-N-Z-A who was sort of their Librarian of Congress. A lovely man, and I just enjoyed him so much when we were working here and we had dinner in my home and such. I got to Romania and I asked to see him. I sent him one note after the other to come and join some theater reception or come to a dinner or to meet some people or call on him in his office.

It never worked out, until I left two years later that I got to see this man. The reason was that in order to have this type of contact the person would have to be approved in their office by the security, the Securitate, person. This was very, very pervasive. It didn't mean, for example, that I couldn't keep up other contacts and make them on my own. I think this always probably always kept under suspicion a university professor and later a manager of an editorial or a publishing house, Dan Arigorescu, who was the first director of the Romanian library in New York which was the counterpart to our library in Bucharest. Dan lived very close by in my neighborhood and he and his wife and his two children were the age of my children, we used to get together and walk on Sundays. Or they used to come over and have dinner with us. He wouldn't clear it with anybody, or [apparently] at least he was allowed to do it. To this day we are great friends. But he is really the only, almost the only contact of that type that I had, you know, somebody who was a friend.

Now I knew another person, pursuing again this idea of what possibilities were there for contacts with people there. There was another person by the name of Anna Baldur, B-A-L-D-U-R, who was a poet. She had come [to the U.S.] on what we called Leader Grantees [program] back in those days. Now they're International Visitors. While she was here, in the summer of 1973 I guess it was, I had helped her. I was the desk officer so I went around and helped her. We got a crew from the USIA film service and we went to the top of the Washington Monument. At any rate, we all became very great friends and my wife was a great friend of her's too. Her husband happened to be a member of the central committee. He was very open to the West and to the embassy and spoke absolutely fluent English. He headed the Academy of Political and Social Sciences. He was sort of exiled there from the inner circles of the Ceausescu government and was not wholly trusted. He died about a year ago. He was always very available to meet foreign visitors. So, if you had a professor or any kind of [government] specialist [visiting Bucharest], we could always get in to see this man. That was all very easy.

Strangely enough, the only [person] I knew in the embassy at that time, there might have been others, but Janet and I were invited to dinner with Anna and Mihnea Gheorghiu, G-H-E-O-R-G-H-I-U, the head of the Academy of Political and Social Sciences. We went there and were invited to dinner to their home which was just down the street from us, and it was a fantastic experience. There had just been some border incidents between Romania and Hungary down on the border. I would put this time approximately sometime in 1975. We were talking about this whole thing and their young daughter got up and said, "Wait a minute. Let's put this pillow on the telephone." It was that open. In the home of a member of the Central Committee. Well, those are just examples of the difficulty one had in trying to develop and maintain contacts and to carry out our exchanges program with the Romanian in those years.

Q: Harry Barnes was the ambassador during the time you were there?

FERNANDEZ: That's right. I arrived about the same time he did.

Q: How did he run the embassy?

FERNANDEZ: Well, vigorously, vigorously. It was not just running the embassy, as I always used to tease Harry about this, there was also the matter of what I used to call "Barnes-storming." We used to go out to the countryside, and Harry was dead right about this, we would go out to the countryside. He would take his political counselor, he would take the public affairs officer, he would take his science counselor, he would take his economic counselor, or one of their people, and their wives, and their kids, and their dogs and their chickens, as we used to exaggerate, and we would go out to the countryside. In any of the major cities, we would meet with the top party and government officials. This was Harry's idea of how to get out there and do it, and I couldn't have been more enthusiastic about it. We met with church officials, university officials, political and government officials; that was a big thrust of Harry's stuff.

Now, there was also during this period the push to do the trade agreement. The trade agreement the MFN, Most Favored Nation. This was another big project of Harry's, in addition to this constant, incessant probing of trying to expand exchanges and contacts. With individuals going on to programs to universities, or with the Sister City committee, trying to develop with some Sister City committee organization in Romania. I suspect the Romanians laughed up their sleeve at this. We know they did. "Those guys are crazy, what are you trying to do? That's not the way this place works." But Harry insisted on doing this, and he was right, and that's the way those societies were opened up, and I think that made the contribution to the element of implosion that some of them met, because Romania imploded entirely, [though] too many of the old characteristics remain there. But that's the way Harry pushed it, and very, very vigorously. I never worked so hard in my life.

Q: You mentioned contacts with church officials. How did we perceive the role of the church at that time in Romania?

FERNANDEZ: Well, with the Jackson-Vanik [Amendment on trade agreements] we had the one problem.

Q: Would you explain what the Jackson-Vanik was?

FERNANDEZ: Jackson-Vanik amendment had to do primarily with the ability of Jews in Eastern Europe to, and Russia, to emigrate. According to this amendment, we had to do very regular reporting on it. So this also then included... [Congressman] Vanik once came to Romania, and I remember hosting and talking about this...the way this affected us on the church side in answer to your question, was the embassy also needed to report on what the state of play was in terms of this emigration. I remember these trips up in Iradia and in Sibiu. In Iradia we met with a Hungarian bishop, I recall.

Q: A Hungarian bishop?

FERNANDEZ: A Hungarian bishop, because there was a [huge Hungarian] minority there. We were [asking], you know, "Can you publish your literature, can you have your services as you will, do you have complete religious freedom?" Well, of course, they would sit there and tell you, "Yes." But I remember in Sibiu, S-I-B-I-U, on one of our barnstorming trips, we went to visit the German... they were Lutherans... and it turned out that this particular bishop had lived in the same sort of house and dormitory where my wife had lived in Tubingham. So we went to see him. I said we wanted to get him away from all these people, "Could we come to see you and your wife?"

He invited us over. The purpose of that, to find out what the hell was really going on. I speak German, and so does my wife, so we thought we could go in and find out something we weren't hearing from these guys around the table. Well, don't bet on it. We really didn't pick up anything. That sort of thing pertained in other settings where I went into areas where they spoke German. I'd match myself up with somebody who spoke German and ask about their newspaper, because there was a German-language newspaper, "How much freedom do you have to do all these things?" You'd never learn a thing beyond what you already knew. There was always on their part this [position that], you know, made you think, "Well, listen, don't worry about all this." So that's how we got involved with the churches, also the newspapers in other parts [of the country]...with minorities.

Q: The country team meetings and discussions among the officers in your experience and others. What was the reading on Ceausescu and his wife at that time?

FERNANDEZ: They were firmly in power for one thing. He would circulate his elites. He went to Korea and to China at one point in the early 1970s, I guess and was very much taken by Mao. He managed with a very iron hand to rule that country and made sure nobody would get into a position where they would become a threat to him. There were...we have the case of Illiescu the man who had succeeded him, reputed to be a great dissident as such. Well, up to a certain point, you know. It is true he was exiled and his political career was curtailed considerably by Ceausescu, but the general reading was that this man held onto everything. And he was half nuts. I always remember, speaking of the late Anna Baldur, may her soul rest in peace, I remember her saying to me once, she said, "Nebun," "He's crazy." You know, the stories. You get a raised eyebrow or a nod or some other [facial expression], but nobody would come out and say, "You know that crazy guy is doing this or that." There was just too much fear of doing that sort of thing. But I think there was the general feeling that you had on your hands a man who was just a psychopath.

Q: Was there concern on the part of the people in the embassy that the Nixon/Ford administration was so intrigued with the idea that here is a dissident place that we were getting too close to the psychopath and his government? Was this a problem?

FERNANDEZ: I'm sure it must have been because it was kind of hard to not see some of this. I mean, this is what kind of a man...the moral situation it creates, people. I'm sure there was a concern, but you know, you have to have some interests, right? It was in U.S. interests at the time, with this differentiation, to work with this maverick country, this country that was a thorn in the side of the Soviet Union. We took a lot of flak for it. I was one who met a lot with the [American] press when they would come to town. It was constant criticism. I remember [one journalist] just raking me over the coals once for the policy we were following of giving Romania MFN and just having quite normal and open relations with them when we knew that the country was very oppressive and totalitarian.

Q: How did you respond when somebody would challenge you? You know, you're the official spokesman.

FERNANDEZ: Not very [well], I'm afraid. I'd say, "Well, you know, the United States..." You know, you'd sort of end up fluttering a little bit, right? This was one hell of a regime you're working in and with. But you'd say, well "The United States' long range interest is to open up the country." The first thing I think, at those times I would say is, that "This effort is to open up Romania to freedom, so that people can know what's going on outside the country and that they could hopefully, at some point, develop [into an open society]. Ceausescu's not going to be there forever." If you look at the press at the time, there was not a very successful attempt on our part to put a good face on U.S. policy. I think we took a lot, a lot of flak for it at the time. I remember the CSCE final act in 1975 signed in Helsinki.

Q: Would you explain what the CSCE is?

FERNANDEZ: Well, the CSCE is the Council on European Security and Cooperation. It's related to something we're going to be talking about later, too. The Mutual Imbalance Forces Action talks, that I worked on in Vienna. But the CSCE came into being...the preparatory talks began in 1972, it must have been, when they had [what were called the] three major baskets, issues dealing with, security, economic, and then sort of cultural and informational. It was basket three that was of course of interest to me and my work. I remember working on the first draft of that even when I was the Romanian and Hungarian desk officer in USIA.

After long, long negotiations the Council on European Security and Cooperation signed what was called the Final Act in Helsinki. I think it was in July of 1975. President Ford, as you said, at the time, [Romania] was the first country that was visited by a U.S. president after the signing of the Final Act. Henry Kissinger was with him and [Helmut] Sonnenfeldt and [there was] all this business [about promoting] open societies. In a way, this CSCE was sort of remotely envisioned by some as settling the borders between East and West and Germany and its neighbors for all time. The CSCE did not run at its own line. The MBFR, I think, which has conventional arms control, we'll talk about later, was related to this. At any rate, the Final Act was to set the tone for things. Now, one of the things about the Final Act is that commitments were declaratory. They really weren't contractual and codified in that sense. Nonetheless, they opened up- (end of tape)

-commitments that were declaratory and that contractual, in the sense of the treaty, but they opened up a wide. This is the whole thing about U.S. policy, where it succeeded, in that it started to open up these societies and loosen up the Soviet Union and lead to the implosion that then occurred with the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Well, on Romania, I'll get into more details on the security side of that, when we talk about MBFR.

But on the basket three side, I don't think there was really any great change in the way the Romanian government and the Securitate handled the whole matter of facilitating contacts between people. I have mentioned the basket three was supposed to be the free flow of ideas and people, something along those lines. Romania didn't make any measurable contributions to that objective after the signing of the final act.

Q: Hal Sonnenfeldt was what?

FERNANDEZ: He was the counselor of the State Department for Henry Kissinger. Now Hal's statement really threw the Romanians into a tizzy. "What is this organic relationship part? We are an independent country...we don't interfere in the foreign affairs of other countries, we don't want them interfering in ours. We're not..." You know, well, back and forth. I could remember our getting our talking points together but "organic," you know, it's like gardening, you really never have [a clear idea of its meaning. But] it was interpreted as another Yalta. That's just as...turning down...not giving Romania membership now in NATO is looked upon by the Romanians to go more into your heart and soul and psyche, as Yalta all over again, you see? So, during this period we had this one issue, I remember with this organic relationship business, but then on the other hand, we had the trade agreement that was reached, and had a goal, it seemed to me, by 1980 we were to have a billion-dollars worth of two-way trade.

All of this was to open up, not just for Romania, but...I haven't used the word "demonstrative" much of what we were doing in Romania had to be looked upon as being demonstrative for other countries, what kind of openness we would seek to make out of those societies. Now that trade agreement was signed...I think we signed that at Sinaia, S-I-N-A-I-A where president Ford and Ceausescu met. I can remember how cynically we were going over this. We had a Sunday morning meeting to determine where should the two meet, and just throwing out the..."Well, why don't we go to Sinaia?" one of the guys, "I can hear it now, the spirit of Sinaia." This is a Hohenzollern castle that Ceausescu was taking over. At any rate, it was a very important time in our moving forward our relations and our interests, and that whole thread that leads to the state we're in today where all these countries have opened up and they're seeking to join our military alliances and our expanding economic and cultural and other relations with us.

Q: Just for the record, 1989 was when the whole Eastern Europe came unraveled.

FERNANDEZ: Right, in November of 1989 is the real metaphor to pick a time when the Berlin Wall came down. Well, I'm looking here to see if there's anything else. Kissinger had made another visit before the Ford meeting in July of 1975. I know at that time it was again the whole agenda of economic and cultural and relations and everything. Then, of course, there's always a lot going on that's probably still hidden in the books that not all of us that knew about. I was only working on the public affairs side. Certainly, I knew a great deal what our CIA station...you, know, was very small but they certainly had activities going on, and I had absolutely no idea...and [there] were defections at the time, including somebody from my section, I remember him very well, that caused a great stir in the whole nature of our relations. Every day I would go in and try to push our exchange agreement to realize more of what we had meant to do. Things like that didn't help [our efforts].

Q: What about relations with the Romanian press?

FERNANDEZ: They were open with certain people. Sure, I could go up and see the editor of Scintea, the "Spark." Same name as Lenin gave his newspaper.

Q: Iskra, in Russian is "Iskra."

FERNANDEZ: Well, you know, they had very open relations, in a sense, in that if I wanted to go see one of these guys, or bring a journalist to them, or bring an editor, I could get an appointment. I could go sit right in that front office and drink that svica, that little plum brandy, and coffee, and their sour orange juice and everything, and I we have all of these big chats about what we were trying to do in Romania and such. So they were accessible. As to the people we would see, there were... someone on the Romania Libre, a man designated as our contact. He was the only guy that you would see. You would see him all the time. You wouldn't have to go through any great rigamarole to see him and he would come to your parties and receptions and everything. Same thing with Scintea and the radio people, they were always just certain people. You had television. You always met with the same people, but a very limited number of people. They had very little to say. You didn't have open chats with them about all this. Those people had their information from RFE and they would tell you outright things you hadn't yet [heard].

Q: RFE was Radio Free Europe.

FERNANDEZ: Or they would have a very limited circulation press clips from the West that this small group of people would see. You had a long list of journalists' names, but you weren't really seeing them the way we're used to seeing them in other countries. Nor was it all open. They were people trusted by the Ceausescu government. Interestingly, I went back to Romania after we put up [a mess] foundation in 1990. I met some of these same people. Speaking on entirely different lines. An apostasy that could only occur in the Balkans. There were a couple of cases of the same people, if I give it some deep thought their names would come back to me because I was just flabbergasted to see these people now in a situation where we're talking about freedom and open press. So, there's not much we could do with journalists. We didn't place many articles. We read all of the newspapers.

There was one young journalist, just to give you a sense of the flavor of the media in that country and Ceausescu. There wasn't any reporting about Watergate. That just wasn't, wasn't. When it occurred there then came out in one of the weekly magazines, a brilliant article, accurate as can be about the whole nine yards about what happened. It was written by a young journalist that all of us knew, and seemed to be a very open guy and interesting to talk to. He went off and had a very hot and heavy affair, I don't want to make this sound salacious, with Ceausescu's daughter. Then we never saw him again. At any rate, this chap did know, he was up on things, very, very bright man and was able to explain to all these people who weren't listening about it or were listening to it and didn't know all the nuances of it, or reading these press clips. Some wanted to make a nice summary of things. [They] did a very, very, good job of that. Now, that sort of censorship, both self and official just pervaded the whole mood there. There was another point that was coming to my mind, it will come back later in this connection about the press and radio and television in that era.

Q: You might then move to about '76...by the way, was there a problem there being followed, attempts to compromise you, or anything like that?

FERNANDEZ: Well, there was never any attempt to compromise me that I can recall except remotely. This was a case where a Romanian musician was going abroad, she was a violinist. She came into my office before we left and asked if I would exchange some money for her. This really smelled a mile away. That may have been the only time. Otherwise there was no other effort to compromise me. Follow you around? All the time. We knew the phones were tapped. Phones worked beautifully in Romania, they were very, very efficient phone system. They were tapping every one of these and keeping track of everybody. Thousands of people, tens of thousands engaged in that, but the feeling that you knew you were always being looked after was... when we went out there...they always knew where you were because they figured it out on the phone, telling other people.

Now, this business of surveillance of the society had a very direct impact on what we did in our library. I mentioned the library, two and a half blocks away from the embassy. Now there was a [photographer] who was available to take pictures of everybody. We knew that these were being shared with the Securitate. It bothered me. I think it deterred a lot of people from coming there. They had police out in front of this [place], had a great big iron gate and we knew they were watching everybody going in and out. It was very, very sad. Everything I said is sort of negative about the Romanians but this is about the government, this is not about the Romanians. Because the Romanians could be the Brucusa and Liuiu Ciulei up in New York University and director of the plays here at the Arena Stage, and is very creative society in that sense. We haven't mentioned very Frenchified. They like their contact with France and prize it very much. Always have. I guess in the 1920s it really became particularly intense. I was always amazed by my service in Paris to confirm this. The French too, had a great affection for the Romanians. There's a kinship there that is quite unique. Almost like maybe Spain and some Latin American countries.

Q: When you left Romania in 1976, whither?

FERNANDEZ: Whither to Vienna. To the mutual and balanced force reduction, MBFR talks where I remained from 1976 to 1980. This is a particularly interesting time for security affairs for lo, these twenty years after World War II we still had facing each other on each side a million men. We used to sit there and say this, very hopefully in the briefing I would give to the press. That was the situation. There were these armaments. There were nuclear weapons. It was a very unstable situation. There was a border situation that hadn't been clarified despite CSCE and all the declarations we wouldn't attack one another. We still needed a more secure situation. You needed to end the war.

Now, the talks as early as 1971, it seemed to me, NATO was seeking to engage the Soviet Union in some kind of arms control talks of a conventional nature on continental Europe. Now, these did not come about the first time that they tried. There was a NATO secretary general in 1971, an Italian, who first approached the Soviets about this. I can't remember the reason why they did not come to pass at that time. There was some event in that period of '71-'72 that it didn't come about. It was really not until I think about 1973 that they had preliminary talks in Vienna which then led to the talks. But it seems to me from May to December along there about 1973 there were the preliminary talks.

Well, all this came in the MBFR talks. The Chinese didn't like them at all. They said, "MBFR meant more battalions for Russia." They feared that you're going to make a deal with the Soviets then they'd transfer them all to the Chinese border. Well, that's anecdotal, but it's not unimportant. Now, what came of this? By the time I got there, the talks had been underway for two or three years. I should be more precise than that. They had a very interesting name. The Mutual Imbalance Force Reduction Talks. The technical name for them was the Vienna Talks on...I was going to look this one up...but we can get this in easily enough I'll get this, because it had to do with reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe. That's what the East called it. We said East and West were talking, East, Warsaw Pact, West, NATO.

Now, we called them simply the MBFR talks. The East didn't accept that designation for it. "These are the talks about the armed forces and arms in Central Europe." Now, despite that, we went ahead because we worked with other fictions, too. One thing was, we said Central Europe also included the Netherlands. We had what we called the NGA. The NATO Guidelines Area, which covered the Benelux countries and Germany. So we had on the Western side, you had the reduction area [with] the Benelux countries and Germany. That was it. Then in the East, you had Poland, Czechoslovakia, yes, that was Eastern Europe. But involved in these were the Soviet Union, you didn't have the Belorussians and the Ukrainians in those days, Romania, Bulgaria, the Yugoslavs were involved in that. On the Western side we had the Brits and the French and we had Iceland and then the Danes and Norway sat in on the talks, too.

Q: Italy, Greece, Turkey?

FERNANDEZ: Okay, Italy was there. Italy was very important as far as the atmospherics of the talks. The Italian ambassador was well prepared. They sort of had this city-state mentality to great power America and Soviet perspectives on what to do in the world. They were very bright and I enjoyed these men. Ambassador Kajaffe, [the Italian ambassador], who then went on to London, where I was later [stationed] and who was ambassador there. At any rate, the Italians were very active in this. Now having mentioned the Italians, the Italians and the Hungarians were not within the NATO guidelines. Because they couldn't come to agreement on this. So these were the fictions that went with the whole thing. You just narrowed down a certain area of a problem and got to work on it. So with all of those fictions that went with it both sides learned a great deal about each other's security concerns.

Now, as far as the positions of the two sides, the secretive Eastern bloc, of course, it was only the military people who really knew the figures of what their forces were. When the Russians finally put down figures of those forces, the United States did... the West did from the start put down figures of the size of forces of East and West. It was in the West, 777,000, if I remember correctly, in manpower in the area including the French at the time. In the East it was 902,000 or something. What I would really like to focus on is sort of the atmospherics to use the word you always use, which I think is the important thing about this. Now, part of those atmospherics was [that the Eastern Bloc] would never come out.

Q: I'm not quite sure what you mean.

FERNANDEZ: They were not included in the area.

Q: But they were sitting there.

FERNANDEZ: Sitting in there by all means. Now the reasoning...we have air forces and such, and Italy...and in Hungary, Soviet troops armed to the teeth. But I really am convinced, and I think experience, "life shows," as the Russians say, that this is a worthwhile endeavor to really try to isolate the problem as much as you could and really work on those aspects of it that were really [essential]. Now, the talks had a curious structure, because you did have the numbers I'd have to get straight on both sides, NATO and Warsaw Pact, you did have a structure mysteriously enough. We had on the Western side, the NATO ad hoc group, as it was called in Vienna. Now, I was the press spokesman for them, although I was in the U.S. delegation.

There was also another talk where just three of the U.S. delegations would meet with the Russians and however many of them, and two out of the three on the other side. That was a much smaller discussion of the technical details of the negotiations. Then we would have these weekly plenary sessions of which there were about 25 or so a year, where you would make one of these speeches that was almost in the end, public.

Then there was another thing called the trilateral, which was just the Germans, Brits, and the Americans. They'd meet on Friday afternoons. All the other delegations would meet after in the Hague, but they were going. This was an enormously vigorous and complex negotiation. The U.S. delegation consisted of the CIA, an office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and ACDA, and the State Department, and I was the only USIA person there. I had my support from USIS Vienna. I was sort of freestanding there. It wasn't a negotiation of that much concern on a weekly or daily basis to USIA.

What was interesting when I arrived with sort of an angle of vision to this experience that's unique, is that when I arrived, there had been a practice of my predecessor, the first U.S. delegation ad hoc group spokesman, of briefing the press after each of the Thursday plenaries. There would be approximately thirty [meetings in the three plenaries during the year]. He would go out and on his own would brief the Eastern and Western press. When I arrived, there was to my horror, immediate Eastern pressure to say, "We want to be part of this briefing that you give." Obviously, they didn't like the result that they were getting from us. Well, my instinct was foolishly, to resist. Jock Dean and Sam Reesers' instinct was, you know, you've got to; this is only equity, you should really do this. What terrified me, you had to go do this with an Eastern spokesman. But we did, find the ad hoc group, NATO...

What we ended up doing, then, was I would go out after the plenary sessions, and give a press briefing from the second to the penultimate briefing of the round and I would have an Eastern spokesman. Now, I was the Western spokesman. The East would rotate its spokesman every week. They would have a different guy. It was these guys who were working on commercial affairs, and everything. I had the luxury of that brilliant delegation with all those different agencies [providing] very firm guidance and a lot of information about the NATO position that the Eastern guy would not. They would come there and say the most ridiculous things because they weren't up to date, they didn't realize what the implications of what they were saying for their own position. So they looked kind of silly more often than not. There were a couple of good hard liners like the East German. He was very good. He really knew his position. The Russian was a buffoon. He never really understood half of what he did up there and said. You couldn't get him to speculate about any of these things.

But at any rate, those weekly briefings, and also at the beginning of a round you'd have a briefing, or a real press conference, as we'd call it. At the end of the round we'd have a press conference. We would do those separately, East and West, but all during the rounds we'd do them jointly and it was a real crane dance. Like the whole negotiation itself. But here and there there would be mention of it and the feeling was that this thing was just going sort of sideways or going nowhere and that it was too complex a negotiation and there were reasons why. There were differences not only within countries within delegations, but between delegations on both sides. So it was very difficult to move this forward.

There are two points I would hasten to make. One is that this led, ultimately, to the foundation for the CFE agreement, the Conventional Forces in Europe agreement, and that certainly is no small achievement. The second thing was that the whole process of negotiation was, if you will, a sort of hostage to SALT. That the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks were really the first priority that they were working on. But every day in those trenches during those rounds on the conventional side we were in there trying to get more data, comparing it and so forth. Of course, the Russians were so secretive and evasive about the whole thing. It was very difficult to reach any kind of specific agreements within the negotiation at the time. But we did agree, on the Western side, we agreed on the design for a necktie for men. Maybe I should have worn it today. But that was...and I don't like to say that too much whenever I'm asked about this because there's no way to describe it other than we took our work very seriously, not ourselves. It was a lot of work and very capable people trying to get these data out of the East and to really have a give and take on that sort of thing. But it did result in the CFE agreement later in the '90s.

Now, there are a couple of other things I want to say about the position. You know, we went into this maybe going back to the fiction of this. We were sort of offering 1,000 nuclear warheads, so many, 36 or so, Pershing ballistic missile launchers and I've forgotten the number, 1,000 of nuclear warheads. In exchange for this we were asking for a Soviet tank army. It turned out during the course of the negotiation, this reorganization, that Soviet tank army was no longer really there, and secondly, we were going to withdraw these 1,000 nuclear warheads anyway. We did quietly do so. I think it might have been completed even before I left.

So what is the lesson of all this? It seems that I come out where I came in. I think in spite of all these things one could say, none of which I say in a pejorative sense about fictions you work with and so forth. This is a very important and worthwhile negotiation. I came to appreciate more and more the complexity of it. The dedication of the people involved in it. The complexity of the societies in the East we were dealing with on these matters. The differences within our own ...within the United States between agencies was just enormous. So it was a hard slide.

Q: Let me talk a little about a couple of things. You were there '76 to '80. In 1976 Jimmy Carter was elected, came into office in 1977. Jimmy Carter came in professing looking at a new way to look at the Soviet Union. Thinking that we could do business with them. Many people thought he was a bit naive when he came in, but he had a national security advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was as hard line as they come. Did you feel any of that, particularly the initial period and then sort of the learning period? You were there until pretty much the end of the administration.

FERNANDEZ: Right. His coming on, of course, the expectations would be so the United States would look at this whole position again and come up with something entirely different. But what they started off with, was talking to the Russians about strategic arms. Off they went to Moscow. Now it seems to me there was some little side sidelights that just don't come to mind about period but it did scare the hell out of the Russians when I guess, when Secretary [of State Cyrus] Vance went, and made these proposals, and they were not acceptable to the Russians and it was just going back to the drawing board and pounding out the SALT agreements with the Jim Lindes and others to get to a position where you signed SALT II, which was signed by Carter in Vienna in '79.

I remember that because I was in the room, in that same room when we had plenary sessions. Brezhnev came out into this room which was absolutely jam-packed. Somebody from the Austrian foreign ministry got in a seat up in the press gallery, which was very, very small. I can remember the Financial Times correspondent sitting next to me. He said, "Look at Brezhnev. He looks like a big 400 pound gorilla." You could see barely moving, Brezhnev at the time, and the SALT II being signed and all the [details] of one of these big meetings like that. Others of which I attended. None of that really impacted instantly on the positions in MBFR because it was so incredibly difficult to reach agreement in the West, as well as to some extent in the East because it's the military that was driving them, and the Russian military at that, and they wanted no part of this reduction.

It might be something interesting to talk about the Eastern delegations and their attitudes toward this. One of the first things that comes to mind is how open the Poles were about this. The Polish delegation was just so open about their concerns, including about Russia. They made no secret about the Eastern position. They would tell you what they felt was right or wrong with it. You had the same thing on the part of the Czechs, [who were also] very open. They'd say, "You know, we totally agree with this position." As far as the West, you look at that map and look at the problem. It used to be the German problem. This is our ancient problem with Germany and Russia. You look at the map you have here. The dilemma I faced in my school for international affairs is whether I'd study Germany or Russia. You know, that this is really what the problem is about.

Q: Did France play any role in this?

FERNANDEZ: The first time around the French weren't at the negotiations at this time. I had absolutely no contact with them. I remember I used to brief the Japanese which was very interesting for me. But France, when they first put down...the West first put down this figure of 777,000 personnel they had acquiesced to this. There was a story told about how the [French] representative up in Brussels must have fallen asleep, so they let these numbers go forward. When we put down new numbers, in about 1979, '78-'79, the French numbers weren't included in the total. So they were not involved in my time directly in this negotiation in any way that was visible to me. They of course were at NATO headquarters and it was there at the NAC, NATO Advisory Committee, I can't remember the name of it, the NAC up in Brussels would really be the one that would formulate the position which was then sent down to Vienna to the ad hoc group to negotiate with the East. There is a story told about how at these stages, the first stage is to get agreement within the U.S. government. Of course in the U.S. government different agencies and different interests involved, there were always leaks about what [they] would share.

Q: I would think the Pentagon, which didn't want to give up any of its toys...

FERNANDEZ: That was probably where the main leaks were coming from. This would affect what was being thought in Europe and throughout the East and West. So you'd reach agreement here, and it would go then to the NAC in Brussels. There you would have to reach agreement, that would be the second step. Then the third step was to send it down to Vienna then Vienna would present it to the East. They said that was always the easiest phase of all, to dealing with the position. But they were long, knocked down dragged out battles about the position. A lot of technicalities I just never understood. But at the time [there were] two things that they were after. For example, about inspections. You had problems in the south of Germany when, say, all right you want to have so many inspections over such and such a period. Well, you going to do these by helicopter, but you know, that's all sort of fogged in so many times a year. Well, that's just an illustration of the kinds that they had to face with us. There was, of course, the ghost at the back of all it was the matter of equivalency. Was one Czech worth one German soldier or one American soldier worth five Polish soldiers? But these equivalencies were matters that were not really dealt with, but were always present in the minds of the [negotiators].

Q: Did you ever find that you'd be giving a briefing and all of a sudden you'd hear the Pentagon spokesman in Washington would cut you down or anything like that?

FERNANDEZ: No, not really. I'll tell you, I was on a very tight leash and was very, very cautious, extremely cautious. We had...sort of interesting atmospherics here...a multilateral negotiation as viewed from the standpoint of a spokesman. In the time I was there because I always wanted to make sure I knew what the hell I was talking about, I gradually put together a big notebook of questions and answers and eventually we took these questions and answers to the ad hoc group and they approved, they'd say, "Geez, you might as well" ...is they would debate these over in the ad hoc group, there would always be somebody wanted their major hobbyhorse included in your answer to the question.

The example I would always give is about the Turks. They wanted to determine flank security, well, whatever you said. So as a result of the exegesis of time and everything they would write these things or approve these things and some of them would come out and they didn't even sound like English. You'd use them, they'd say, "What do you mean by that?" You'd just have to read it back to them. But that's all part of the give and take of the public affairs. You can't go down to the mat about these things all the time. Some of the points are extremely technical and they just had to be gotten through.

But on that point of the guidance and this was a marvelous assignment to learn how to prepare for a press conference or just presenting a position. I used to make up some of the questions that would come up and I would take them into Jock Dean every Thursday morning, go upstairs in the morning on which we had plenaries. That was always more difficult than the press conference. Because Jock would say, "You know you realize if you answer this they're going to ask you [about that]." These were really very finely honed or creatively ambiguous sorts of statement which would make no mistake about what your position was. But in preparing some of this material I remember at one point the representative of the office of the Secretary of Defense. We were chatting about it and the way the questions were written it said "possible situation," "suggested response," and "if asked." So he says, "I give you a possible situation, and the suggested response will be 'yes' and then the 'if asked' would be 'no.'"

While I was sort of working with this there is something about that little story that always suggested to me, I kept my papers and all the debates, there is a story to be told there about what it is like to prepare press guidance and to use it, especially in a setting where you have a spokesman who could counter, an opposing spokesman right at your heel and in the audience you have the Eastern, you know, the Pravda and Izvestia and that, they were just haggling and hectoring me all the time. Although we became sort of good friends but very sort of cynical sort of stuff that you could always sort of blow off with just stating your position. But that is one reality of a multilateral negotiation.

Q: While you were there two things happened. First was the Soviets introduced the SS-20 missile, an intermediate range missile which was perceived to threaten just Europe and was considered to be a destabilizing element. How did that affect you all?

FERNANDEZ: It affected us very dramatically, in that as part of the response to this there were two things. One was if I'm not making the wrong connection, one was to upgrade the Pershing, the Pershing I's would be made into Pershing II's. Partially in response into the SS-20, I think. But the other thing was the relation of the neutron bomb. Now that really created an atmospherics that were just enormously important at the time, particularly in Germany. There was a debate about this throughout Europe. Of course our response to that was this was not a neutron bomb, it was a munition. You know, it was one variant of the...the same thing as the old time bomb and that what was attached to it as they said, "This will destroy buildings but not people."

Q: Considered the ultimate...it destroyed people not buildings.

FERNANDEZ: No, it would destroy buildings.

Q: I thought it would destroy people because of the way it is...

FERNANDEZ: Maybe you're making me hesitate here a minute. But the thing about this was that would be a certain humanity to it. Now I better really look this up, through again. I think you got it right.

Q: Because the idea was that it was considered the ultimate weapon by the East. The idea was, it would give out rays which would destroy tanks but would not leave a long term residue of...

FERNANDEZ: Gosh, I don't know this, I hadn't thought about it, I guess in so long, and it's such an important issue at the time, but the neutron controversy really was not part of the negotiations. So much of this, as you would with SALT, you'd say, it wasn't part of the negotiation. But the neutron atmospherics lasted for a long time. The credibility of the Eastern and the Western position at this negotiation was always questionable to a lot of observers because of the larger issues of SALT. The larger issues of the neutron and so forth.

Q: Let's say we were talking about the neutron bomb enhanced weapon. The Soviets introduced the SS-20 at the time which was then considered destabilizing. What was the mood on the part of our delegation about how serious the Soviets were on this?

FERNANDEZ: The question was, what were the reactions of the Soviets to the neutron? The Eastern propaganda to this was pretty intensive. What they could say at the negotiation, it just wasn't on the table. That was how we would handle it, that this is something independent of the negotiations. What we always want is a serious and positive response and we said two of the proposals we have on the table, to diminish the tensions because of the armed forces, really the conventional forces there.

Q: The SS-20. Was there the feeling that the Soviets were just playing for time? What was the atmosphere as far as how serious did we feel they were about mutual balance reduction?

FERNANDEZ: Well, there were times you could question it because of these other issues. You know, they were almost exogenous to the subject matter of that particular negotiation. But the SS-20 was obviously escalating the threat to the West. Shortened the time from six minutes to bomb, or something you could get one of these things in. It was obviously something to which the West had to respond. Then the response came in what was originally called theater nuclear forces, and then became the intermediate range nuclear force negotiations that were aimed at reducing this threat of the SS-20.

Q: What about when the Soviets went into Afghanistan in December of 1979? What did this do to you all?

FERNANDEZ: It sort of kept the negotiations going sideways. The negotiating didn't stop. I don't recall exactly that we would even address that sort of thing in our press conference.

Q: But I'm wondering about the mood. Was it a feeling that the Soviets were on the march?

FERNANDEZ: My recollection at the time is that it destabilized the situation further, obviously, in securing the whole area. But my feeling at the time was a horrible mistake had been committed. As I recall, "How in the hell could they get in that kind of a fix, to pick up something like this?" Which is to this day is unresolved, yes. Well, I guess there were all kinds of reasons that the experts could give, but gosh, it was very scary. I remember we were off, it was during our ski vacation, that suddenly I heard on the radio that they had gone in there. I was quite scary. When you look back it really...you know, this is probably the end of January [and in] early February we picked up negotiations again. By then this thing had a life of its own. Any kinds of questions that I would get, if a correspondent would call me, I would say, "This is not just something we are dealing with in the negotiations." It was always a great escape hatch. It made me look kind of dumb, but, well it was true, but you really didn't have to deal with that stuff.

Q: By the time you left there in 1980, you had four years watching this develop. What did you feel about these negotiations?

FERNANDEZ: I thought they were a little tired. Because obviously, projecting myself. I certainly enjoyed, because I learned at the time, including very much involved in learning more about security matters than I ever thought I'd ever care to know. But the least generous you could be is to say they weren't doing any harm. But the fact was the negotiations were point of contact. I know of no other big thing that was negotiated through there. Obviously there were channels of communication through there that could come to the talks every once in a while. So, you'd keep up with them. But they certainly were a forum in which you could learn about each other's security concerns that it was worth it to me. I certainly could think of no substitute that could do what MBFR was doing at the time in 1980 when I left. Any substitute for that forum... You know, there was the West-West aspect to it, the East-West aspect to it, the East-East aspect to it all. But I think it focused attention in mutual ways that eventually led to CFE as I said, and I don't think CFE ever would have occurred if they didn't have the MBFR experience to lean on.

Q: Why don't stop at this point? We're stopping now in 1980 and where did you go in 1980 after you left the MBFR?

FERNANDEZ: I'm going to London, the end of my rainbow.

Q: Okay, well, we'll get you to London next time.

Today is September 4, 1997. Aury, you're off to London. You were in London from when to when?

FERNANDEZ: Well, I had two tours in London. The first from 1980 to 1982.

Q: All right, well, let's stick just to that.

FERNANDEZ: The second one is 1986 to 1989.

Q: Well, we'll just stick to '80 to '82. What was your job there?

FERNANDEZ: Well, I was brought in there actually by [Ambassador] Kingman Brewster, I'm always flattered to say, who wanted a press attache. Somebody who worked with him on the press really wanted to be more active than he was, but the feeling was we needed somebody. Actually, ambassadors don't pass up press attaches that easily. In the assignments process you had USIA at the time, the feeling was that you would take or leave whatever you could get and you wouldn't have somebody to interview. But it turned out I had seen [USIA Director] John Reinhardt at a PAO meeting in Vienna and he said, "Let's go over there and have your interview," and I had the interview which led to the job with not just Kingman Brewster, but with Ed Speer. That began a very exciting period of my career.

As I said at the end of the last segment, it was sort of the end of the rainbow for me to go to London and it was extraordinarily flattering for me personally and professionally to be working with Kingman Brewster. I worked directly with him. Of course I was under the PAO and he was my rating officer and such. But it really gave me exposure to what a big embassy is like. London is in many respects, unique. We have all those things about the special relationship and such between the United States and the United Kingdom. We have all these ties which extend so far and wide. Some of which are dramatically unique. For example, the CIA station there did not engage in intelligence recruiting and such on the British government and there is an enormous amount of sharing of intelligence that goes on between the United States and Britain through CIA...through the chief of station there.

My work was focused mainly on the press, as I would say and the ambassador's press relations. One of my tasks was to do a summary of the daily press for the country team meeting which helped bring me into the orbit of all of the issues that were of interest to the country team and to U.S. interests in general. It was a marvelous embassy to work in from many standpoints. I had wanted to go there many, many years and I always wanted to make sure when I got there I would have a job that would be high enough up so that I could have access to what was really going on. Among the activities and way the embassy was run, was what they called expanded staff meetings. There they would bring in all the foreign service staff from all the agencies and they would hear someone hold forth, a prominent British politician or a visiting American leader. It was enormously exciting and one could keep very, very well informed and could ask questions directly of people involved in the political process. People who come to mind: John Major, Tony Benn, and many others who would come and we would have the chance, a group of about 30 people or so, to ask questions of them about Britain and what was going on.

As for the nature of the British press, another point, maybe we could focus on that, and overlap the two assignments because there wasn't much change in terms of the procedures and the way the press operates there. But as for issues between the United States and Britain, the major one was really in the defense policy of Labour, I would say. Where there was still a great deal of residual influence of the old Labour of the '50s and '60s. Neutralist and certainly anti-nuclear [opposition]. That presented us with an information problem.

Q: By the way, at the time, what was the political situation, where did Labour stand as far as...?

FERNANDEZ: Well, Labour's position was anti-nuclear and it really was quite reserved and not fully in support of NATO and U.S. and British policy.

Q: But Labour was not the government?

FERNANDEZ: No, these were the Thatcher years. Thatcher went in, was it '69?

Q: I think considerably later, in the '70s. She went up till about 1990, about 16 years, so we're talking about '74. So, anyway, it was well into the Thatcher years, but Labour was still, obviously, the alternate government that we had to consider.

FERNANDEZ: I'd like to just make another comment about Labour and how it was working internally. An experience I had was during this period I remember going to a Labour party conference. We always went to all the party conferences. The issue was how the party would elect its leader. Whether it would be as it had been previously, the parliamentary party had the major voice in all of this. What came out of that was a vote in the Labour party that led to the election of the Labour party leader with one third parliamentarians, one third constituency, and forgot what the other third was now.

Q: The unions?

FERNANDEZ: I think it was the unions. This brought Michael Foot to the front and that seems to me ancient history because I remember as a student from the university in '58, '59, studying about the position of the Labour party at the time, because he became leader. Well, this exacerbated really, the whole matter of relations between the United States and Britain as I say, in terms of an information policy. There were repeated statements of opposition to U.S. defense policy.

Q: How did we respond?

FERNANDEZ: I'm trying to think back here of the things that we had underway. At the time, it seems to me, we working on the issue of intermediate nuclear forces, the INF, intermediate range. We bring them in, we call them theater nuclear forces, but that sounded too much like it was just aimed at Britain...or at Europe, so they made it intermediate range missiles. That was one of the subjects that we were working on and to some extent I was engaged with the Ministry of Defense in working on these problems to work on public opinion in Britain to be accepting of intermediate range missiles. They already had some capability in this area, but I really couldn't, just off the top of my head.

Q: Well, I think we talked earlier about the Soviet SS-20s and we were introducing the Pershing II missile which was in response, and there had been a great outcry particularly instigated by the Soviet Union and communist parties and leftist parties against this. What the Soviets did was all right, but our response to it was not. At least this is our viewpoint.

FERNANDEZ: This is exactly what was going on. That was the thing we had to convince them. But ironically, to jump ahead to my second assignment, because it is directly related to what we're speaking about. We say there is an information problem we have. When I returned to London in '86 we were then carrying out information programs with the Ministry of Defense about the dismantling of strategic nuclear weapons. It sort of went full circle on that. But times change and policies change and also realities. At any rate, back in those times there was considerable Labour party opposition to the response we were seeking to give to the SS-20.

Q: I'd like to come to back the press. You mention Kingman Brewster. Who was he and how did he operate?

FERNANDEZ: Kingman Brewster was a very, very warm man, and as I say over and again it was just a great honor and flattering for me to work with him. The early stages...I arrived in July of 1980. Of course, in November Carter lost the election so Kingman was getting ready to leave. In that period in July to November I was really quite privileged to go on a number of things with him. He sort of liked, I guess, some of the ideas and some of the experience I had and I had occasion to sit with him in the big limousine going off to lunch and was just accompanying him to press interviews and such.

He had been the president of Yale. He had, of course, defused the uprisings at Yale and that occurred at other universities during Vietnam. He was very clever, very relaxed, very literate, just a very pleasant man. But he was, really, quite involved with policy. For example, on issues about the Middle East, he was certainly very well informed about that and made demarches to the FCO, and to the British government about Middle East issues that were always sort of lurking there.

At any rate, singular to Kingman Brewster's great success in London was Ed Streeter who was a career Foreign Service officer I had occasion to then serve with in OECD later. There was a real style, there was a real substance, and there was real class to the way things were carried out. Now, I don't know how much you want me to go off on what the nature of British society as it from my worm's eye view and how it affected our operation.

Q: Let's talk about the fit. We're talking not about the social side but we're talking about the political society. That as far as the American...what we wanted and how the embassy saw British society and how we worked within it. This is during the '80s.

FERNANDEZ: Contacts with people were very easy to make, obviously. You had a common language. As the wags always say, "A common language is dividing you." But we were very, very accessible and the nature of British society although it is incredibly [different] from ours, the United States, the whole...committed on their part all these...class nature of their society and such, makes it for a very different sort of place. The top leadership all came from the best schools and everything.

But there was a slow process beginning of sort of, that one hesitates to say about Britain democratizing it, but opening up opportunities to the Asians and Africans that were coming in to the society in greater numbers to the Commonwealth. And just the normal course of things. More people were becoming better educated and being drawn into the political process. There was a slow erosion of this class structure which nonetheless, and I think in the eyes of most Britons, still remains pretty rigid and pretty stratifying and effects the way they view the United States and the way we view them.

As for their views of the United States, again focusing on sort of the information side, I could almost say [they were] forever appalled by some of the misunderstandings about how our presidential operated vis a vis their prime ministerial or parliamentary system. This tended to often, to lead to criticism of the United States which was ill thought out and really not taking into account our great differences. Just to take one. When the government comes up and [proposes] its budgets, the chancellor of the exchequer takes it to the parliament and he sort of is really sort the central bank, head of the central bank and the head of the department of treasury. Now, that gave the chancellor of the exchequer really a tremendous amount of power. Very often one would read things which would criticize what was going on in the United States, "Why doesn't the Secretary of the Treasury do this or that or the other." Really what it was was the misunderstanding of the limits of the Secretary of the Treasury vis a vis the chancellor of the exchequer in the United Kingdom.

One worked at those things and, you know, over here in the Commons and the club houses and it never really disappeared, probably never will. I wouldn't want to draw it as the major problem, but I would suggest it as indicative of the differences of the prism through which they were looking to the United States.

Q: Did you get any feel for the fit between the Carter administration and the Thatcher administration? Margaret Thatcher later had the great love affair with Ronald Reagan. Let's talk about it. Ronald Reagan was not even on the horizon when you arrived there and Margaret Thatcher had been doing some things which in many peoples' eyes were quite justified, and [she reduced] the power of the unions. It was a major change in British policy since World War II. The Carter administration came out, in some ways, more closely akin to the Labour government. Was this, in fact, true? What was the fit?

FERNANDEZ: I never sensed any great Thatcher-Carter warmth, I guess, because as you pointed out, this became so intense during the Reagan years. Reagan and Thatcher were so close. There was nothing resembling that in the period I can recall. But, you know, they had good relations. There was always the cheer for the special relationship.

Q: Well, also, it's like, "How's life? Well, it's great if you consider the alternative." In this case, how is the Conservative government? It's great if you consider the alternative, which is Michael Foote, who is almost unacceptable.

FERNANDEZ: Oh, clearly unacceptable, yes.

Q: Could you talk a little about how Michael Foote was perceived at this time and the Labour party by the embassy?

FERNANDEZ: I was mentioning the party conference that I went to. I'll never forget it. Where Michael Foote was elected party leader was at Wembley. I was near there with Tom Siantz who was the political counselor. I'll never forget how David Owen, after giving his talk at the party conference, came up and sat with the diplomats and press section. We were sitting [in the visitors section]. Foote was giving a speech. Foote was a very literary man. His demeanor in the House of Commons in debates is a great picture to watch. It's very cultivating, in a way, and it was always ideological. With Thatcher the Conservatives were so firmly in power and they had such a clear majority at the time the numbers of which escape me entirely. But he was certainly not viewed, nor were many of the radical Labour leaders as being the best alternative or any alternative particularly in the area of defense which is so central to our relations.

The whole society has a texture to it that for the foreign diplomat or press attache to understand it, [one] has to really be engaged and go and see. You could see it plain as day at the party conferences. The SPD, and of course the Conservative Labour Party conferences, all of this, and also the trade unions conference. One had a chance to see the professional politicians and labor unions involved in the whole process. They were pretty powerful people who were being eroded, whose power was being eroded, by the policies that Thatcher was just sort of barreling through. It diminished the power of the trade unions. You, know who it actually gained in some respects within the party, the labor unions contribute to the funding of the Labour party, so they're a very important element.

One could go off to these party conferences, see all these people, one would know all the journalists in the position I was in. We had a chance to see what these people were about. There wasn't any personal hostility to any of this. I never encountered this in talking to people even like Robin Cooke the British Foreign Ministry back in those days. But it was clear that their policies and interests in that certain place, certain kind of time, were just contrary to our interests.

Q: Did you have a feeling that on the Labour side... There are two things that are going on. One is what they're pointed towards, their old idol, which is long since gone - their mortal enemy, the Soviet Union. The other one is... their ship was, if not sinking, listing a great deal because of what Margaret Thatcher was doing. When you got those people aside, were they concerned about what was happening?

FERNANDEZ: Well, no, I never heard any wave of persons...criticisms from people in the party about other persons in the party were easy enough to come by, but they were not severe. It was always about the opposition. You know, you have a very open dialogue with them, but you certainly never came to any fast agreements as to how...that would effect policy. When we get to talking about '86 it may be a time to bring this in because it demonstrates what happened when after Neil Kennek became the party leader.

When the party conference of Labour [occurred in] the fall of '86, a very [strong] statement made by Casper Weinberger the Secretary of Defense was picked up by Kennek as being an argument in support of the Labour party's position on nuclear weapons. We went in that party conference. Charles Price was then the U.S. ambassador. Bud Korngold was my boss and the public affairs counselor. We countered this at the party conference in front of the press saying, "What Mr. Weinberger said does not accord with what the Labour party is saying." I could remember Kennek taking umbrage at this [and] really grating the ambassador and Ambassador Price for speaking out in effect against the Labour party's position. But it was well remembered what we did at that party conference as far as presenting the U.S. position on defense policy and that is... where we were headed, I guess, way back when, whatever comes out. And [if] our policies were misrepresented, we would counter them, and would put in the counter arguments.

Q: Let's talk about the press. Probably it'll overlap into the two periods, but let's concentrate on the first part. You'd been in various places. What was your initial impression and how did it develop of the British press?

FERNANDEZ: I was familiar with the British press on a daily basis for many years, certainly going back to my MBFR years in '76. I always read the Financial Times and the London Times and the Guardian. So when I went there I had a leg up on all the names and who was doing what and such. The British press is hyperactive. [For instance, look at] the tragedy with Princess Diana. You know, just pouring out, they have this capacity to pour it out and on and on and on and on. They're real news junkies and there are many of them. There are many different outlets and there are different people on them.

[During this] period, [Rupert] Murdoch of course, had come in. You had the Sun, the biggest newspaper with a circulation of at least [100,000 or perhaps one million], and there was just this plethora of papers of different varieties all going after the story and they went to varying levels of sensationalism. The Guardian was on the left. Clearly, ideologically left. The Daily Telegraph was supporting the Tories. The Times was sort of conservative, but certainly more in tune with the Tories. For the purposes of our interests in our work. One of the curious things to work with for us in terms of our foreign policy was the broadcasting. The word broadcasting.

Now, curiously, the best outlets and the best forms for getting our position across was a morning radio program called the Today program, which was on from about six to eight in the morning. It was not television. It was always, in both of my tours there, most often difficult to convince a press man, a government press spokesman, anybody who is bringing an official, government official of the United States, to want to go on morning television. You'd have to say, well, you know, morning television is the place to go, you go on the BBC Radio Four, and you do the Today show.

But it was a very different structure in which to work. Here you certainly want to catch NPR, but you don't catch the nation as you do with Radio Four. We did a considerable amount of work with them and just this countless numbers of people from [government officials] to general [official visitors] to...just any number of people. We would always take to that morning radio program where well informed journalists would question about U.S. policy and we had a chance to present our positions.

Q: This is from a perspective almost of a tourist going over to England. I just recently came from there. You have a paper of four million like the Sun. All one can think about is the third page, which is a bare-breasted lady. But under the lens compared to what I would consider the red meat of the New York Times or the Washington Post, which go into things in some detail, these papers seem to be pretty skimpy on what I would consider a real analysis and real information.

FERNANDEZ: That's direction. These are tabloids. But there is something to be said about the Sun and their writing, which is actually very, very, accomplished. It wasn't always sensationalism. More often than that there was sensationalism involved, but when they did an editorial or a commentary it was well written and well reasoned and well informed. Which is not to say that that justifies all the other [sensationalism] that had sold them. But it had enormous influence. You'd walk down the street and you'd see the headline of the Sun, you know, that influenced a lot of opinions. You know, it was out there in the newsstand the kiosk which was sort of a...

Q: Here you are, the American embassy, the press officer. How did you make contact? How did you find it dealing with the reporters? Or did it make any difference because it was going to be decided in the board room of the Sun?

FERNANDEZ: There was a good bit of that. I remember when I first arrived in 1982 and [Ambassador] Brewster had a reception for me at Winfield House, introducing me to the press. Of course the guys who were there for all these years had all these hundreds of names of people. They would come to these things. I had the privilege of [knowing] some of the more familiar people who would come to receptions such as that of other receptions at the embassy. Winfield House was always a great contact point. A good indication of that was a hot ticket [for a Middle Eastern] journalist who would generally go. So it was really easy to see that.

I can recall after [Rupert] Murdoch bought the Times and Harry Evans was the editor. He's now the Random House editor. I can recall going to see [a man named Weiss] with Casper Weinberger, our secretary of defense, and having a discussion [with] their defense correspondent and Harry himself and Murdoch was there. This is sort of a little tattletale, but an interesting footnote. He had just taken over the Times of London and Harry Evans is a very self-sufficient and hard-driving man. Really sort of treated Murdoch not dismissively, but he didn't have him in the conversation and then all of these correspondents, the defense correspondents, asking probing questions about the Libya bombing raids and just going on and on and on and Murdoch would ask a question. But I remember again, Harry takes Casper Weinberger out and all, everybody follows on his [trail], but Murdoch would go down the elevator, he'd say, made some comment about, "Well, that doesn't represent my view." Now that is paraphrasing, he didn't say that.

But, obviously, this is a time which great change was taking place with his ownership of the Times, and getting ready to move up and walk into one thing or another... Really, he was changing the whole structure and management on the paper and modernizing it. At any rate, I mentioned that Weinberger was going in and how the press would treat him. But these are all fellows...I'm still in touch with one of these guys who was very interested in the oral history project who was here in the States much of his time and doing a book on East-West relations during the Cold War that I was mentioning the other day. He was with that group and I can remember his probing questions about the Libyan bombing raids.

Q: Ronald Reagan was elected in 1980. What was the feeling both in the embassy and in Britain about the election of Ronald Reagan? He was pretty much an unknown as far as politics were concerned. It's sort of scary. Could you talk about this?

FERNANDEZ: Well, it's sort of scary, as you say. There were many people who said "Here is an untested man who has a reputation as being in a Hollywood background and everything and not being a very substantive man and being a great friend of Maggie Thatcher, being very conservative." Yes, there were concerns about him. I mean, the president of the United States having his finger on the nuclear button. In every country, all of us had served in, is always a concern, in the case of Reagan, when that black box is, or attache case, that black button is carried around, is turned over to him then there is this great concern about...

Throughout that, Reagan came back to London on one or two occasions. The one I remember was when he came over after his presidency and spoke at the Guild Hall and that was an occasion I had to speak to him. He gave a very stirring and soaring speech that was well accepted. He was out of office and supported, of course the administration policy. But there was this feeling that this is a widespread [view] in the United States that this man who you knew from a substantive and intellectual point of view was not wholly prepared to do the lending that he ultimately did.Q: Did you as the press spokesman both when Reagan was running for president, before he had been elected, and after the election, find that there was a great deal of concern from the press?

FERNANDEZ: The United States is reported on very closely and is followed very closely. There's a big corps here and a very accomplished press corps here. Here in the United States there is a very influential press corps. Probably their stories had in many instances greater influence than something generated locally. It was a Washington story so it was a Washington correspondent who reported it. These are people who know a great deal about the United States and [are] enormously [qualified]. Those stories tended to shape views a lot. They reflected very often views of the United States. Of the press corps, everyone wouldn't call it derogatorily these pack journalists, but there was a certain amount of these journalists who came...opinion a week opinions that would be formed by them in the United States from Americans.

Q: In our analysis is the press officer at USIA and the political officer, one of the things is you have to identify where is the power in the country. You can't go around and talk to everybody or deal with everybody, you want to figure out who is really important. British society is a stratified one, but did you find certain elements of it interesting from the society point of view but of little account as far as what we were after?

FERNANDEZ: Well, no, I think more of in terms of our interests in how we focused. We had these extensive contact lists, we separated the correspondents. There were diplomatic correspondents, there was political correspondents, the editorialists, there were the [reporters]. All of these were on our lists and the effort was to get in touch with them. Now at the very highest levels of these people, the commentators, who were well known, we didn't really work with them very much because we knew them. I'm thinking at my level, we certainly knew them all because they would call every once in a while and want to go to the top of the embassy [hierarchy]. One would be in touch with them. There was also a great deal of contact between the political section and the top commentators about domestic politics. Very, very close relations. Something that was carried out independent of what we did in the USIS post information program. We knew about these and we worked very, very closely with the political section. Over the years we worked very, very closely and my interests gravitated to that and I knew from the press, I did more of the reading of the press than maybe some of the political officers did perhaps. But at any rate, we really had a wide range of contacts, I would say, we went across the board. The ambassador would meet with editors who would meet with the big publishers, Thomas Black, Rupert Murdoch...who was our friend who fell off the ship [Robert] Maxwell. These people were all quite accessible at the top levels and I'm sure Ed Streeter had a vast program of contacts with journalists as well as across the board in the political spectrum.

Probably the first thing I would say in any circumstance about the British press is how different it is and the British media situation from the United States and our First Amendment society. The British still have the Official Secrets Act that was passed in 1918, they have what are called the Green Notices where editors consult with the best [lawyers] to clear about information they might have doubts about, or they were told by the ministry of defense what information is sensitive and they don't want to come out. It's a very different situation from the First Amendment society we have here and really doesn't exist anyplace else in the world. But it always struck me, looking back and observing Britain over the years, the extent to which there are, for purposes of our Constitution, restrictions on press freedom. They're very severe. It doesn't lower the decibel level of the debate.

Q: But sometimes it moves off into other fields more.

FERNANDEZ: Well, it's just that they wouldn't publish certain things if that threat was there. There was a press counsel that was supposed to pass on this, at the time was William Moog, that's M-O-O-G, who was the head of the press counsel, to whom complaints could be addressed. They would run things through the press counsel if there were any complaints about the particular story.

Q: You were there into '82, so you were there with the transition. How did the transition go within the embassy from the Carter administration to the Reagan administration?

FERNANDEZ: Well, the first thing was, [Ambassador] Kingman had to leave. Which saddened me, when he left in January of '81. Then John Louis came in. John Louis was without any previous experience in the Foreign Service. He had some foreign business experience in Latin America...

Q: Johnson Wax.

FERNANDEZ: Johnson Wax, right.

Q: He was I think, a classmate of mine in college.

FERNANDEZ: Is that right? It fell to me under Ed Streeter's guidance to put together the press program for him. It might be at this point interesting to describe some of the fora that exist for the ambassador that are public affairs and media related. For example, there is always the Pilgrim Society which was formed I think during the war years, the British and Americans. There weren't many Labourites around at that point...it was largely the lay of this and the law of that. But it was a big forum for the ambassador to present his ideas. That speech was always worked over by a lot of different people. I played a larger role in Charlie Price's speech than I did in Kingman Brewster's.

But it was a forum that you could really take the ambassador to and that's who took John Louis. That's where Kingman Brewster gave his farewell address. That's where Ray Sykes gave his farewell address in the year he left. Starting off saying, "I promised myself when I came here that I'd never say 'special relationship' or quote Churchill." Which all his speeches always did.

Q: Did Louis take a different approach? From the time you were with him did he seem to take a different approach than...

FERNANDEZ: See, I was only with him for several months. But one of the things that he established that was exciting and interesting to me, and it was Ed's initiative, was to try to brief him on certain aspects of Britain and the Northern Ireland question and defense policy and such, and with the political section, with Kim Pendleton, we worked on this, we briefed him and Sandy Verchbauer and also, he's gone to NATO now, was in that group. To me, this is about the best it could get in terms of having a substantive knowledge of the issues and problems. Most of these were way beyond in experience of John Louis but he worked very hard at the time to grasp it.

I left that following summer. I was already on my way to OECD and I didn't really spend that much time with him. He then was away during the Falklands war and he was someplace in the Caribbean or in Florida and the war broke out and he called up and said, "Should I go back?" It was already, you know, after that he was then replaced by Charlie Price. A very difficult post for an American ambassador. He's very, very visible. There are some elements that would be critical of him whatever he does. There were very, very high demands on his knowledge of what is going on. Moreover, there are so many things that go on that are sort of exogenous to what he could do every day. The experts would come and negotiate their issues, and they were certainly numerous. The ambassador didn't always play a big role in this, but he had a steady stream of high-level visitors.

Q: It's a problem. I think with Louis, for example, he was in way over his head. He was a garden variety political appointee. It wasn't his fault, this just wasn't his thing. Compared to some of the others, the president of Yale goes with tremendous prestige. The present ambassador, Admiral Crowe, is head of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These people really bring something with them. But the head of Johnson Wax... He wasn't even the head of Johnson Wax, it was a family thing and he's just a, you might say, garden variety political appointee. To put him in London, he just doesn't bring a damn thing with him.

FERNANDEZ: Well, that unfortunately was true, and this is something you can't really do much about from an information point of view if the person does not bring those qualities that make them have access. That I think certainly John Louis had to Reagan but I wasn't that particular level of policy...

Q: You know, the cool story that went around the Foreign Service was the best thing that John Louis did during the Falklands crisis was stay down in the Caribbean. This has happened with other political appointees when something really went on. They don't have the same feeling of immediacy that I think those who grew up in the trade do. When there's a crisis you show up.

FERNANDEZ: Well, this is an interesting point about our foreign relations, relations with Britain. The whole Falkland crisis. Now, this broke just as I was leaving for Paris. I regretted that because it would have been interesting to have been in on some of these meetings with Haig and Thatcher and such. But this frenetic Buenos Aires to London shuttle that Haig undertook...

Q: Alexander Haig, our Secretary of State at the time.

FERNANDEZ: I was probably very closely from Paris and OECD with the British newspapers of course with the British radio. I used to listen to Radio Four on longwave. So I was informed about it and I would go back regularly to London because my wife and my son were still there, they were not coming over until the following summer. It was really a period of a lot of criticism of Haig becoming so involved in this. Of course, Mrs. Thatcher was tremendously dismissive of all that. I can still see one time when I was there and I could probably look this up in my daybook, where early along when this first started I went...the crisis grew. But I can remember Maggie instructing Haig as to what to say an appearance that would make before the press as they came out of the...coming out of Number 10 Downing Street and Maggie was just sort of telling [SecretarHaig,] "No, Al, that's not right," telling him what to say. This was not, come to think of it, this was not during the Falkland crisis.

As I say, I was already on the way, but Haig had come through there on one or two occasions during the time that I was still there and I can remember how dramatic all that seemed. [George] Bush came through as vice president at that time, too, in that period before I left for OECD. But here was Maggie really dominating so many things. She really was very, very forceful and I can still see the two of them on the stairs coming out of Number 10. Through the work just trying to describe a little more about what it's like in a... Foreign Service officer carrying on America's foreign relations during the period with Britain.

I was always pleased with the relations we had with the spokesman at Number 10. Bernand Evans, very close to him, many a time you'd see him at small dinner parties. Very, very, forceful and colorful man. The same thing was true in the palace, too. In Buckingham Palace, Mike Shae was the Queen's press spokesman. I had served with him in Bucharest so we sort of had an in with that. All of those contacts were useful for visiting dignitaries all the time.

Q: Other than protocol procedures how important was the palace, the queen, the royals and that from your perspective.

FERNANDEZ: Well, it remains important these days of now as we see the Princess Diana tragedy is really being raked over the coals. There was always this undercurrent of questioning and opposition and criticism of the royal family. Well, how did this work itself out with the United States? The palace is not supposed to be involved in politics, but there were times...this was after '86 when Reagan came back. He went and had lunch with the queen, but it didn't play a big role in all of this, which is not to say, from what I knew from talking to the press secretaries over the years was that the queen didn't understand much. She was very, very well informed, but there was just this style that was very, very difficult to project in that class ridden society, always in favorable terms.

The queen mom and the queen have their fans, and so does Prince Charles. But it never really came up in any big way in what we did. I went to a few parties a couple times. But our contact with them was more just on a personal basis as I was saying in the case of Mike Shea who became the Queen's spokesman and when we went over to Buckingham Palace I checked up with him, but it was really not a terribly operational sort of thing from an information point of view.

Q: During the '80 to '82 period, you were in London, other than the beginning of the Falklands war, were there any other major events that...?

FERNANDEZ: There probably were and they're not coming to mind, but I'll probably see the transcript... I would get to them.

Q: Well, you can add anything you want.

FERNANDEZ: No, there certainly must have been because of this distraction I've had the past 24 hours as far as this job I have not gone back to my...

Q: Well, that's all right, but you can add. Then in '82 you went to the OECD. What is the OECD?

FERNANDEZ: The OECD is the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development. Which grew out of the Organization of European Economic Cooperation, the Marshall Plan after World War II. Something that Kingman Brewster had worked on, it was always fun to talk to him about those years, too. But at any rate, this organization they had, I guess, at the time 23 or 24 members, they were really all the west European, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and it was a marvelous...I always like to say, as I wrote down here "the greenhouse of ideas." There was always a lot of activity there and they were high-level visitors. Secretary [George] Shultz came through, [Ronald] Reagan was Treasury Secretary, [William] Brock used to come through all the time as USTR, [Secretary] Malcolm Baldrige, as Commerce, Mark Feldstein was the Counselor of Economic Advisors, and Beryl Sprinkle. Well, I could drop more and more names to engage in what my dearly beloved Kingman Brewster used to say, "Sorry, Joe, the Queen hates name droppers."

Q: The first place you were there from '82 to when?

FERNANDEZ: '82 to '86, four years.

Q: What was the role of the OECD as opposed to the Common Market, the European Union, whatever you want?

FERNANDEZ: It was in a sense, freestanding. It was not a policy-making body. It was more of a...where policies surely were debated because statements were made about them. But it was, as I say, freestanding. One of the institutions that came out of the Marshall Plan where studies were about all the subjects and they were sort of forerunning for what became the G-7 summits out of that. There would be a direct relationship between what would come out of the G-7 summit, of the ministerials, and then what would go into these summits. There was just terribly exciting work going on in the field of trade in terms of commercial policy, in terms of communications.

There was once a long, long negotiation about transborder data flows. There was an economic policy committee. That Committee Three or Committee One that used to meet two or three times a year. And the Feldsteins and all the leaders, Sprinkles, and all the leaders of...thinkers of a number of countries would come together and they would sit there for two days and they would then debate policy. Well, these things didn't always make fast years. That is to say the myriad of ministerial meetings that were happening, for example, the ministries of transportation. Those things really didn't resound in the press the way the annual surveys that were done internally would just buzz through the whole press the world over. Or the ministerial readings where the Secretary of State and the President would come.

During the period I was there [Secretary] Shultz came once. He was the only Secretary of State who came to the meeting. But these were meetings where there was always negotiation beforehand about issues but where they would sit and talk about issues. One of the issues during those years was, for example, that as far the United States had information issues in foreign relations was the matter of our deficit, budget deficit. Well, they used to beat up on the United States for having this great budget deficit and drawing in foreign capital and such and just not contributing to world growth. This was something that the whole time I was there was pretty active because we did have a big budget deficit at the time. We always argued that as a percentage of our GNP we weren't as bad as a lot of other countries, depending on how you cut it. Our position was that our budget deficit was not as disruptively destabilizing as it was often charged.

We then came back in about '84, was it or so, with a proposal in the OECD again, focusing on the international information relations problem. It was focusing on the problem of structural adjustments that what our theme then became was that what we really needed in Eastern Europe was to free the capital in labor and merchandise markets and this was a theme that we pushed very, very hard in which we put an enormous amount of energy because this was in many respects a response to the charge that we had too big a budget deficit.

Q: Well, I'm still unclear, other than having meetings and debating things, sounds like almost an academic exercise as opposed to coming down with policy or something like that. What did you think?

FERNANDEZ: It tended more toward that. You know, it was more of this greenhouse of ideas than a policy-making... You know, out of which would come let's say, factual treaty type of commitments. You didn't get that. These really were policy statements. They were talked about as issues. We're talking about another fora. The trade issues we're talking about the GATT, and the size of the GATTs. There is where the contractual obligations would come in.

Q: Could you talk a bit about maybe, from your perspective national differences as they went into this. Take the French for example.. I mean, what role did they play?

FERNANDEZ: They played a very big role. Of course they were right in town so they could always send big people to the meetings. No prime minister was in. I don't know that the foreign minister was in, too. The minister of agriculture, the minister trade and people like this would be at the meeting. What was their role? It probably wasn't a great difference than it was in any other forum in which the ministers between the United States and France, whatever you wished. When I left the organization was headed by a Frenchman. But as I say, I don't think there was anything terribly unique about U.S.- French relations in that forum from any other place, believe me, just no differences of what the priority should be. I remember during this period Mitterrand had come to power.

Q: As a socialist.

FERNANDEZ: A socialist and a series of nationalizations if you will of the banks and such. These policies were not particularly beloved by the United States. He did in time have to make a U-turn. But when he came in, was it in 1980, '81, he began a policy, a regime of directing the economy which is a strong French tradition in trade which the United States is not very much in favor of.

Other issues that we would, trying to think of another one that came up. For example, there was the matter of subsidies to industries by the government in order to compete internationally. There was the matter of giving countries foreign assistance as a sweetener to get certain deals. One, let's see, the devolution of the telephone system, or whatever. These could be very flagrant instances of the French using ODA, Official Development Assistance, to sweeten the package that French industry would be negotiating with the country in order to enable them to get the contract because U.S. and other companies couldn't make these kinds of arrangements, which would run contrary to whether or not it should be done. The fora in which that was debated was called an export credit [arrangement]. According to that arrangement, [there were] two categories. For each of these categories a government could provide a certain percentage of ODA [Official Development Assistance]. Now there is where we really separated with the French. The United States and France were really fighting that out in the export credits arrangement because then that would become policy that the country would be committed to, in a sense codified their behavior or what was legal to do in our international relations with each other.

Now, what are the French things? Well, I think on the trade matters we were always tuning and throwing during this period. I could remember Bill Brock, he was our USTR, a splendid man with an outstanding staff of people. I just want to talk about USTR as far as the Foreign Service and the State Department and foreign relations. There is no question that the USTR was a lean and mean agency that had great influence, and still has, over our foreign trade relations. Greater, in many instances than the Department of Commerce and the Department of State. At State, the old economic officers will always [be critical] or complain about [USTR being] the stepchild of the whole thing. Well, STR was very much involved in trade policy. There was a trade committee and it was a trade committee involved in trying to adjudicate differences and interests and reconciling [differences].

I remember during this period that there was a GATT [General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs] meeting in Geneva where the issues were taken. What struck me was I went down there to assist with the information activity and I was not feeling well at all, I had a terrible cold, and I said, "Well, I think I'll go home." Well, it was Sunday afternoon, so I got in the plane and went back to Paris. In the meantime the negotiators stopped the clock. They had these negotiations to go on until midnight of another day. So they stopped the clock and they kept negotiating. Lo and behold, that Sunday morning I left Paris and I woke up the next morning in Paris and the talks were still going on.

Q: Did you find within the American delegation a growing questioning of what the development of the European Community meant to the United States? This had been a cornerstone of our policy, particularly keeping the French and the Germans from fighting each other, and the more you can tie them together... The main thing was to keep the French and Germans... So we were sponsoring all this. This has been a cornerstone since 1945. But I was wondering whether you were finding people beginning to say, "Hey, wait a minute, is this a good thing as far as the U.S. is concerned? Will this become a closed market for us?"

FERNANDEZ: Well, those issues, you know, for market access and competition policy for example, those are really handled in Brussels. The major ring for the negotiations was in Brussels.

Q: I was just wondering, when you're discussing these things, one of the things, obviously, the French keep French interests foremost and I was wondering whether the United States was in discussing wondering where are all these joint cooperative like Common Market and other things going?

FERNANDEZ: See, they actually had a representative on the executive committee, seated. Let me just try to answer this from another different point of view in terms of what U.S. priorities were and what is going on in OECD. There was one issue that we didn't want to expand too much. That was environment. ...let's do more for the environment, so there was a constant struggle within OECD to keep a reign on that, so an issue like that wouldn't come to dominate...

Q: This is reflecting the Reagan administration early on, acid rain, and everything like that.

FERNANDEZ: That is correct, there would always be... There was a bureaucracy there that was very clever. [The people] trying to fill up their briefs and their sections were very, very active indeed in that sort of thing. Now, in terms to go the other side of the issue that were of interest to us in that forum, [there] were as any others, was the matter of East-West relations. Well, there, I think any officer of our mission at the time you would interview would remember that getting the East-West issues out on the table for a good debate was always a problem. It was always a compromise on the part of the others. You would say, "Well, you know, we really don't need, you know..." Then the other country would say, "We don't..." you know, went into it holding their noses to debate East-West issues. But this was the Cold War and we were very interested in having that [included] as an agenda issue for the executive committee, XESS, the Standard Executive Committee meeting which were always very interesting. You had two or three kinds. You always had big fish that would come from all the countries to this.

Q: You left there in 1986. Back to London?

FERNANDEZ: I went back to London.

Q: You were in London...?

FERNANDEZ: I stayed there until 1989. I really had been scheduled to come back here to the United States. I had been abroad now, 12-14 years and there was some question about how many years I was allowed to be abroad, how they always interpreted figures. At the time I was going to go into the Department to work in ARA in [Assistant Secretary of State] Elliot Abrams' operation. That I was doing holding my nose because I just never did anything in Latin America since that Chile assignment. My interests were elsewhere. Anyway, I accepted it and the night that we were having everybody in to say "goodbye" and say, "Yes, I'm going to Washington." Six-o'clock at night I remember exactly I had to call exactly at six o'clock and Ed Streeter [was saying], "Would you like to come over here? Charlie Price wants a press attache."

Well, this did come about, and I went back to London to work there under Bud Korngold and with Charlie Price as his press attache. That was a very interesting period. Here was a very different sort of person from John Louis in terms of international experience in that he...he was a political contributor obviously, but he had already been the ambassador to Belgium. He was a Kansas City businessman, an enormously likable man. I am very, very fond of him and he was very, very approachable about doing things with me. So that made my work exciting. We got out and around an awful lot. I can remember going to Winfield House at 6:30 in the morning to have coffee and talk. He would do his homework and grasp the issues and on the substantive side he knew his limitations, I would call them, not in the pejorative sense, but he would just look at it and get his mind around a policy issue. He was very well liked and very open. I had been around him with Sir Geoffrey Howe and Mrs. Thatcher and people and [one could note that] they always had great affection for Charlie Price. Even after he left, went back to Kansas City to his banking [career].

He had a very interesting background and I never really knew this until one of the last interviews we had. He described his background. He said, "My father began selling apples at the railroad station." He never liked to talk about it too much, because that was not really not his banking [background]. But at any rate, his father never finished high school and I was [surprised] one time [when] Charlie said, "I never finished college." But he was a very affable person. Very hard working, very hard working. Of course, he was an outstanding businessman.

Q: Were there any particular issues again, during this '86 to '89. Were you there at the time of Kuwait or...?

FERNANDEZ: No, I was back here by then. The Berlin Wall wasn't down yet. The Berlin Wall came down after I left. But as I was mentioning earlier we did have the matter of the destruction of the nuclear weapons. Which was an enormously elaborate scenario which brought to the London and to the military bases teams to run through the problem of destroying some of the INF. That was interesting because then the Russians would come in and they were just moving along on this. As an information problem during that period that was without question the most interesting, complex, challenge and wide-ranging in that there were on both sides all kinds of guidance. Working with the British ministry of defense, with Number 10 Downing Street, with the FCO, the Foreign Commonwealth Office, Foreign Office, about all these things. That was a very interesting thing to be involved in. I think by then there was agreement in Britain, "Yes, let's get these out." There were still anti-nuclear protests.

Q: I was going to ask about the women at Greenham Commons. Did you ever have to deal with them?

FERNANDEZ: Never directly, yes, but sort of always, because this is always the most vocal opposition and sensational opposition to the nuclear policies. They chained themselves to the fence up there at Greenham Common they had their camp up there and their [headquarters] up there. We were going through the exercise with them and this big Russian aircraft, Illyusian, coming down to let off the Russian inspectors who were going to look after this destruction of nuclear weapons.

Q: Did anybody ever do a profile of the women of this Green? I mean, figure out who they were?

FERNANDEZ: I'm sure there were, yes. You know, the Brits have a habit, a great tradition of, what's I guess, feminine protesters.

Q: Suffragettes...

FERNANDEZ: Yes, suffragettes, you know, you go back to Lady Astor. There have been in British politics as much as it...are presented them very much of a male-dominated situation. There have been vocal opposition and very prominent women. Of course, Maggie Thatcher is the pinnacle for all this.

Q: One thing I've always been curious about. In the United States during the Reagan years as has been recently one of the great debates that's raged and there have been protests and even people killed over abortion over abortion rights in the United States. But in Great Britain there seems to be more to do over animal rights. Did you find this was a...?

FERNANDEZ: Oh, yes, you're onto an interesting thing here because this really reflects on how you present the ambassador. There always had been in Britain a certain amount of...intensive opposition to blood sports. Shooting, as they call it, we would call it hunting, is a very, very popular pastime. As you know from the recent [debate], "Well, it's always been a concern the ambassador's going off shooting." Well, he's into blood sports, you know. That was not something that one would keep up at the top of the list or the front page of what the ambassador was up to. It was a very, very strong, deeply ingrained tradition. Just as there was opposition to restricting blood sports. Again we've seen that in recent months here in Britain.

Q: Were there any other issues during this time that...?

FERNANDEZ: Well, I'm a little embarrassed to say, there probably were and I just haven't gotten my mind together...

Q: Don't worry about it, we can pick it up.

FERNANDEZ: When we do the transcript I'm sure that we'll come up with a more coherent and exhaustive list of the kinds of issues we faced in this country that we could share this time reminiscing and such.

Q: In '89 you went back to Washington.

FERNANDEZ: I came back and retired.

Q: A quick word. You've been on the board of the American Foreign Service Association?

FERNANDEZ: Right. That's really been just in the past year-and-a-half or so. But what I did when I retired that we were talking about in our break here, I did get a job, I was appointed to a position of a non-profit foundation that was really created by Larry Eagleburger and Max Kampelman called the International Media Fund. Larry Marx is one of the U.S. chairmen. Marvin Stone is the former editor of U.S. News and World Report. What we were engaged in was, from late 1990 to the end of 1995 was helping develop independent in east-central Europe and Russia. We were funded essentially by AID to the tune of about \$18 million.

Q: What were your impressions of trying to work with the former communist media?

FERNANDEZ: Well, that was a big challenge. First of all, there was very little experience with open media assistance, so there was a very, very, and it still remains today, a very low level of professionalism from a journalistic point of view. There was limits as to what these countries throughout this area could absorb. They were about the same in all countries. We could not go in there and remake them all into First Amendment societies, to be sure, but there was just an attempt, on a small scale and in key ways to try and get these countries to develop their independent press and radio and broadcasters and also journalism education.

We established centers in Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Bratislava and Bucharest over the years where the media resource centers, where they could go to study journalism in an open society. It was an enormously [rewarding] experience. One that I certainly don't miss every day because it was quite challenging. It did take me back to see the area, particularly Romania, where I had been posted and see some of these people that had been communist journalists in their time, who had undergone their apostasies and went to work on being journalists. It was a very corrupt society, very low-level capacity to absorb assistance, and just this very difficult transition. Which is still underway.

If there is one thing I would add to this record, and I will clean it up when we get to the transcript, but one of the clearest memories of this work we did for five years has to do with a very important aspect of our foreign relations, namely foreign assistance. The organization that we had was funded, as I said, primarily by USAID. USAID at the time had never worked in this area, certainly did not have vast experience with the media. We found it extraordinarily difficult to move ahead sometimes because of the bureaucratic sluggishness, because of second guessing of what we were trying to do. In general I have very, very unfond memories of the performance of AID in trying to bring this about. I say "we." I don't think I stand alone.

It was a very distinguished group of people who came to work for us. There was [William] Shannon, for example, the former president of ABC News - a senior counselor she was called - and we worked very intensively on all this, and very professional people.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much.

End of interview